

ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Tribute to Walter Lantz



© MCA

Lantz Interview by John Province
Preview of Disney's The Lion King
by Jim Fanning and Mike Lyons

SPACE GHOST

Coast to Coast

CARTOON
NETWORK

HERE HE COMES TO SAVE THE NIGHT!

BOREDOM
BANISHED!



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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Publisher-torial

Actress Mary Steenburgen is a personal favorite of mine. In fact, I consider her to be one of the best practitioners of her craft in the world. And yet, when I screened *Dead Of Winter*, I dozed off during some of her best scenes. How can this be—Mary's biggest fan sleeping during a performance? Luckily, I wasn't reviewing the film. (Although, some people think snoring is a negative vote.) I was able to see the film at a later date under ideal conditions. Wonder of wonders, I thoroughly enjoyed the film.

You're probably asking what connection a Steenburgen film has with ANIMATO! I just wanted to illustrate the fact that there's always two sides, at least, to every story.

My first exposure to *The Castle of Cagliostro* was a dubbed version. I came away from the film with a lukewarm feeling. I wasn't impressed. Mike, on the other hand, liked the feature very much. With the exception of Guy Maddin films and Neil Young's music, Mike and I generally share the same taste in art, music and film. So I wondered to myself why the rest of the world liked *Castle of Cagliostro*, and I was not moved by its brilliance. A few months passed and a subtitled version of *Cagliostro* fell into my lap. Voila! A literal translation of the script changed my perspective. A new appreciation for the film blossomed. Should I be reviewing Japanese animation for this magazine? No, not at this point in time. Because, while I have an opinion on certain animated pieces from Japan, I don't have the historical experience to justify an honest and informed review. Lucky for you and me, ANIMATO! has a cadre of experienced and dedicated reviewers willing to share opinions and observations on a wide variety of media.

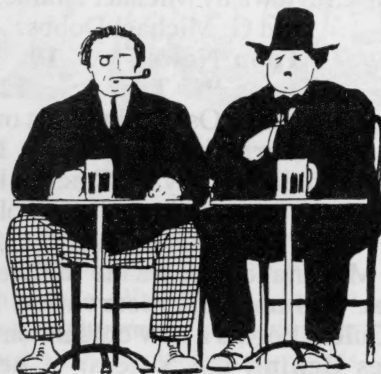
Paul Krempa's piece on limited edition cels generated a lot of mail. A few readers didn't agree with Paul, but liked the idea of an open forum for cel collectors. One reader questioned Paul's qualifications. While Paul doesn't need me to defend his experienced background, I would like to address ANIMATO's general criteria for reviewers. Mike has been around animation for a long time and knows the serious, experienced and honest writers. Our venerated editor insists reviewers screen every available episode in a series. ANIMATO! also rejects reviews where personal prejudice overshadows an honest and fair review. Sounds basic, right? I've read reviews in other periodicals where an animated series was dismissed solely because Steven Spielberg produced it. My favorite is the series reviewed by a respected writer without actually screening one episode. I assume this was meant as some sort of humorous statement. Incredible.

Keep in mind some opinions do not stand the test of time. A shining example is *The Wizard of Oz*. Contemporary film critics considered this classic to be one of the worst films of 1939.

We also reject reviews that are cruel or mean spirited. Some folks think cruel is a synonym for honest. It's not. Vicious and outrageous reviews are entertaining, but they're not good for long-term reader commitment or a magazine's credibility.

ANIMATO! readers and advertisers expect honest, in-depth and balanced reviews of animation media and related products. We only know one way to do this. Straight ahead with no fingers crossed.

- Patrick



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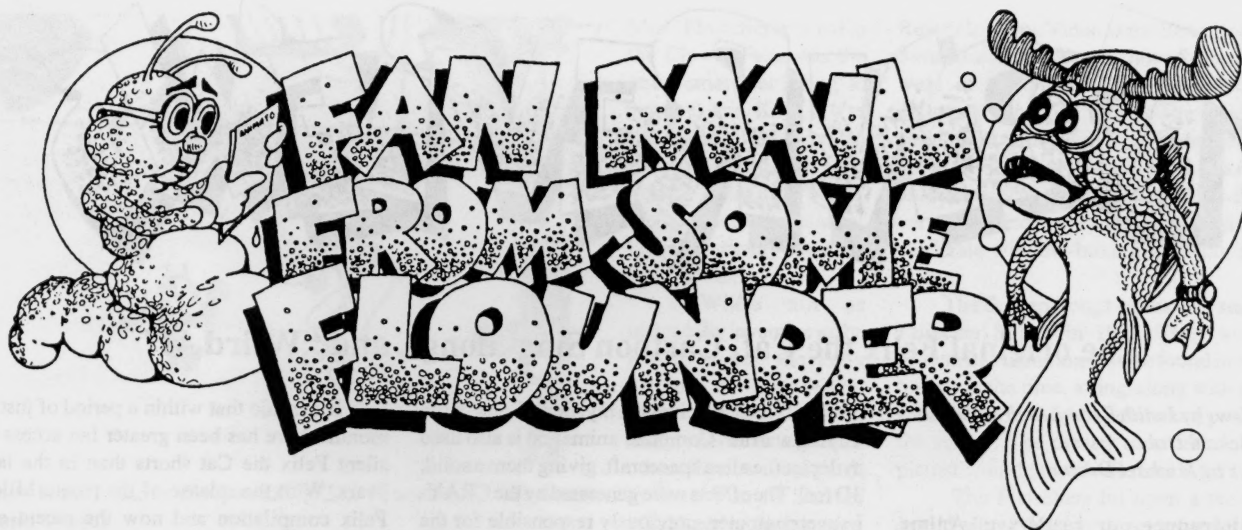
About the Cover...The late Walter Lantz is seen surrounded by the characters he, and the world, loved in this original painting by Massachusetts-based artist Ray Dorow II.



Table of Contents

Publisher-torial	1
Fan Mail From Some Flounder	3
Toon Reviews	4
Videotape and laserdisc reviews by Michael Draine, Judith Reboy, Andrew Osmond, and G. Michael Dobbs.	
Toon News	10
Toons 'N' Tea	12
British correspondent Andrew Osmond reports on the British animation scene.	
The Curiosity Shop	14
Former ANIMATO! editor Harry McCracken looks at weird and forgotten cartoons in this new column.	
Young Readers' Review	15
Stephanie McFarland watches the "dillweeds" grow on television.	
The Animation Preservation Report	17
Archivist Jere Guldin begins a new column on saving our animation heritage.	
Faces Behind the Voices: Cheryl Chase	20
Michelle Klein-Häss profiles voice actress Cheryl Chase.	
Star Trek: A Second Look	22
Kevin Lauderdale thinks the animated <i>Star Trek</i> deserves re-consideration.	
Toon Collectibles	24
Paul Krempa looks at the Disney limited edition cel program.	
Independent Eyes: Fred Stuhr	26
Michelle Klein-Häss interviews model animator Fred Stuhr.	
Special Section: The Return of Creator-Driven Animation	28
Fred Seibert, Ralph Bakshi and John Kricfalusi interviewed by G. Michael Dobbs with a special art section by Ralph Bakshi and an essay by Joe Murray.	
Special Section: A Salute to Walter Lantz	
Walter Lantz: A Life in Animation	38
John Province interviewed the late producer and animator in 1992.	
Woody!	46
A look at the life and times of Woody Woodpecker by Jim Korkis.	
Lantz on Video	50
The Art of the Storyboard	52
A section from a 1946 Woody Woodpecker cartoon.	
Special Section: The Lion King	
The Lion King's "Mane" Men by Mike Lyons	54
Directing The Lion King by Jim Fanning	56
The ANIMATO! Film Poll Ballot	63
The return of animation fans' ballot for ranking reader favorites.	
Yogi Bear: The Final Chapter	65
Tim Smith concludes his look at the career of Yogi Bear.	
Young Readers' Page	71
Out of the Inkwell	72
Artists this issue: Ray Dorow: Cover. Ralph Bakshi: Pages 31, 32. Mark Hurley: Page 18	





The Long...
Michelle Beaubien
Burnaby, B.C.
CANADA

This is one of the best animation magazines I've come across. The interviews (in Issue 28) with Billy West, Lucille Bliss and the gang were especially enlightening and interesting. It's high time voice actors got the recognition they deserve for making so many children happy (and us older kids as well). I look forward to reading more about them, especially Jim Cummings (who does various Disney characters) and Tresse MacNeille (Babs Bunny, Dot of *Animaniacs* and a host of movie star imitations).

I must disagree, however, with the review of *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*. I realize that it was a commercial failure at the box office, but please remember that it was aimed at adults, which is almost impossible. Rated PG-13 in Canada, it WAS a cartoon. I personally don't consider it appropriate for children or sensitive viewers of ANY age. The sudden shot of the Joker's victim (the grotesque rictus grin) was startling the first time I saw *Phantasm*. The second time, I noticed a man and his two children sitting in front of me and quietly warned him of a couple of frightening scenes. He covered their eyes and thanked me afterward. I have a child at home who saw a similar picture (again, a result of the Joker's toxic gas in the animated series version of *The Laughing Fish*) who could not eat supper that night and had nightmares. This movie, in my opinion, should have been advertised to appeal to adults and teens only, who are the main

ticket-buyers in North America. The movie also alluded to a discreet sexual liaison between Bruce Wayne and Andrea Beaumont, another reason it should have been directed at an older audience. It reminds me of McDonald's promoting *Batman Returns*, advertising Happy Meal toys for kids, yet children were not allowed to even SEE the movie.

So did I like the movie? YES! It was too moody and dark for some people's taste, but brilliantly executed in terms of sharp, expressive animation, gritty dialogue, realistic action scenes and a rarely-seen tough female character who kicked ass. Mark Hamill, of course, was a usual treat as the Joker.

I enjoyed the Mackey Report (Saturday Morning and Syndication Animation 1993-1994), which evaluated the various animated entries for children's programming. I love *Animaniacs*, which recalls the sophisticated adult humour that made the old Warner Bros. cartoons so enjoyable for everybody. The Brain and Pinky segments are hilarious. I agree that *Bonkers* is a pale imitation of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Sometimes the plots are so convoluted that it's impossible to understand the story if you tune in the middle of the show. It's imaginative, but too frantic for my taste. I really hate *Goof Troop*. Goofy is the least interesting of the characters. Something's wrong if the most charismatic character is the heavy (Pete). I believe Jim Cummings does his voice by the way.

Dennis The Menace is boring and poorly drawn, and is so contrived. *Marsupilami* (which I can't even PRONOUNCE!) is a one-note character (HOO-BAH!) who might

have more charm if there were less visual jokes about that loooooong tail of his. *Sonic The Hedgehog* has some *Star Wars* elements to it (freedom fighters versus a tyrannic overlord), but again the main character, Sonic (who is voiced by that annoying Steve Urkel fella) is the least appealing of the cast. I personally like that French fop Antoine, who's such a jerk without a clue that he steals the show.

I learn so much from this magazine, whether or not I agree with the reviews. It's always interesting reading and thorough to boot. I love the episode guides and background scuttlebutt on people and ways of the industry.

I beg and plead once more: PLEASE do an indepth coverage of Disney's *Tail Spin*. Since it's a descendant of 1967's *Jungle Book*, (featuring Baloo the Bear, Louie the Ape and Shere Khan the ruthless tiger), I strongly believe it deserves an episode guide and other cool info. Hell, Rudyard Kipling started the whole fuss by writing the book — but *The Jungle Book*'s popularity soared once Disney got his hot little mitts on it.

And the short...
Miles Prunier
Putnam, CT

Please! No more focus on *Beavis and Butthead*! Ignore them! Maybe they'll go away. Their presence is the worst thing about ANIMATO!.

TOON REVIEWS

The original Felix the Cat, Cartoon Sing-alongs, and "Weird Al"

Video Reviews by Judith Reboj, Andrew Osmond
and G. Michael Dobbs

Laser Discs by Michael Draine

(To help introduce our readers to Anime, ANIMATO! will begin running reviews of not only new material, but some of the classics of Japanese animation. GMD)

Lensmen

Streamline Pictures

VHS \$29.95

It is a time of intergalactic war. Humanity is threatened by an evil totalitarian empire, and the only hope of salvation lies with a small band of rebel warriors. One such rebel is forced down on an obscure farm world, the home of a young boy who dreams of adventure. In what follows, the boy narrowly escapes the destruction of home and family, and embarks on a quest into the enemy empire.

Sound familiar? No, it's not the plot of *Star Wars*, or rather it is, but it's also the premise of Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's *Lensman*, a 1989 tribute to the sci-fi classic. Never since the days of *Battlestar Galactica* has there been such a slavish bit of copying: from the R2D2 droid to the alien bar and climactic space battle, there's a prevailing sense of "deja vu" throughout. Innovative *Lensman* ain't. (Ostensibly it's derived from a much older SF tradition, namely the pulp novels of E.E. "Doc" Smith, but I have it on authority the resemblance is strictly nominal.)

And I like it. It's not as stunning as *Akira*, nor as thought provoking as *Tombstone for Fireflies*, but it's good clean fun nevertheless. The draughtmanship's up to the standard one expects of modern anime, though colour is erratic: the opening vision of the farming world is vibrant and lively, but most of the remainder is a mix of blacks and blues. Sometimes this dark-toned approach works well, as when the characters investigate alien landscapes, but more often than not it's just boring. One suspects a cost-cutting measure, made to accommodate the much-vaunted computer sequences, which are good but not spectacular. Many of them are reminiscent of *Tron*, especially a surreal scene in which Kinnison,

the film's lead, receives the mystical "Lens" from a dying warrior. Computer animation is also used to depict the alien spacecraft, giving them a solid, 3D feel. The effects were generated by the CRAY-I supercomputer, previously responsible for the Jupiter scenes in *2010*.

The characters are obvious stereotypes. Kimball Kinnison is an all-purpose youthful misfit who (surprise, surprise) is heir to an heroic legacy; feisty rebel Clarissa provides the obligatory love interest, while the brash pilot Buskirk is a sort of cross between Han Solo and Chewbacca. The story is pared to a minimum, basically a set of fast-paced set-pieces, but presented with such energy and enthusiasm that you don't really care. The nicest surprise is the quality of the dub: for once, the dialogue is natural and unforced, and spoken as if the actors really mean it!

All in all, *Lensman* is a mindless, very entertaining piece of animation, and a must for *Star Wars* fans. Personally, I still prefer Steven Hahn's *Starchaser*, released round the same time, but *Lensman* is a close second. One can only hope the subsequent sequels and TV series will follow their illustrious predecessor to video.

Oh, and there's not a robot power suit in sight.
Andrew Osmond

Felix!

black and white and color; 60 minutes;

Milestone Film & Video

#MILE022

\$39.95

Presenting Felix The Cat, Volumes One and Two

Bosko Video

\$29.95

Thanks to animation historian and animator John Canemaker, the reputation of Felix the Cat and his principal creator, Otto Messmer, had been academically established in a fine book and a series of articles. Now, however, thanks to Bosko Video and Milestone Video, animation fans will be able to see what only Canemaker and other animation historians with archival access have been raving about.

It's ironic that within a period of just a few months there has been greater fan access to the silent Felix the Cat shorts than in the last ten years. With the release of the recent Milestone Felix compilation and now the recent of two volumes of Felix cartoons for Bosko Video (with several more volumes promised to follow), animation buffs will be able to evaluate the cartoons that have been described as the most popular of the silent era. (See Michael Draine's review of the Milestone collection on laserdisc.)

The new tape from Milestone boasts of five silent shorts, one early talkie, and some late-in-life footage of Messmer working on what we can assume is some sort of animation project. The print quality is quite good (with source material from the Cinematheque Quebecoise), and the musical score is adequate.

If pressed to admit, though, which collection I enjoyed more, I'd have to say the Bosko collection is superior to the Milestone tape. That is not to say the Milestone tape is not impressive. There are only two cartoons which are featured on both the Milestone and Bosko collections, so owning both is not a hardship.

The advantage the Bosko tape has is several-fold. The cartoons have been slightly window-boxed to preserve their original ratio, and the new score by organist Dave Wickersham is magnificent. His work on a vintage pipe organ lends an appreciated feeling of being back in the Twenties enjoying these shorts in a movie palace. The soundtrack was recorded in digital stereo for the optimum effect. The quality of the prints range from good to excellent.

For me, though, the real plus is the presentation of the first Paramount Screen Magazine from 1919 that introduced Felix. While the Milestone tape also included this cartoon, Dave Butler of Bosko Video gives us the *entire* animation segment of the short subject, meaning we get several other cartoons as well including an Earl Hurd Bobby Bumps cartoon. This is the kind of fascinating historical presentation which distinguishes the Bosko's (and other small companies') releases from the animation tapes produced by larger companies.

If your vision of Felix is the Joe Oriolo-



A frame from *Felix in Hollywood* (1923). (Courtesy of Milestone Film and Video)

produced shorts of the early Sixties, well, you're in for a bit of a shock. Don't expect to see Poindexter, the Professor or Rock Bottom on the Bosko tapes. And say goodbye to the Magic Bag.

This Felix is a city-wise alley cat whose adventures blend a feline characterization with the more surreal possibilities of the animated cartoon. Felix is independent. He doesn't have a re-occurring owner (not at least on these two tapes), but that doesn't mean he's against helping people out with their problems. In the best cartoon tradition, his tail is detachable, and can be used for a variety of purposes.

The conventional wisdom about Felix has been he was the most popular cartoon star of the Twenties, the only one with a personality, and the funniest animated star. I don't ever try to argue with issues of popularity (for instance, I still don't understand what made Mickey Mouse so appealing), but I don't agree with the critical assessment that Felix was the only silent cartoon star with a personality or the best defined personality. Nor can I say having viewed these three collections that the Felix shorts were the funniest shorts of his time.

The animation directed by Otto Messmer is smooth and accomplished. If Pat Sullivan was Felix's biological father, then Messmer was the adoptive dad who actually raised him. The success of the Felix series can be directly attributed to Messmer's skills as an animator. Apparently, Messmer didn't care to use close-up shots very much, and didn't vary perspective often. Most of the action in his cartoons is seen in a medium or long-shot.

Despite this moderately stodgy approach, many of the Felix shorts are enjoyable, and Felix does have a recognizable personality. Felix is a loner whose slumped head walk, whenever pondering a subject, became his trademark. His personality is an interesting contrast to the other widely popular cartoon character of the Twenties,

Max Fleischer's Ko-Ko the Clown. Felix was the street-smart cat trying to survive, and Ko-Ko was the Peck's Bad Boy, an innocent who got into trouble with his "boss," Max Fleischer because of his own curiosity about the "real" world.

While not as technically inventive as the Ko-Ko shorts, the Felix cartoons are fun to watch, are sometimes quite funny, and are never as tedious as other silent cartoons, such as Paul Terry's Farmer Alfalfa series, for instance.

Under the heavy hand of Pat Sullivan, Felix did not make a transition to sound with much grace. A handful of crudely-done sound shorts were produced in 1930, but they apparently made too little impact to counter the nation's fancy with Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse. A nicely-produced series of color cartoons starring Felix from Van Beuren also failed to rekindle Felix mania. Felix remained a fixture in the nation's comic pages for years afterwards, though, and is back in comic books thanks to Joe Oriolo's son, Don.

I can only wish that Bosko does for Ko-Ko what the company has done for Felix. If you're a fan of silent animation, then do yourself a favor, and get these two tapes from Bosko. They're essential viewing.

Follow The Bouncing Ball Volume One; 82 minutes
Follow The Bouncing Ball Volume Two; 80 minutes
\$29.95 each
Bosko Video

It's difficult to imagine today's audiences would actually feel enough of a community spirit while in their nearest shopping mall multi-plex to join in with their neighbor in singing a song, but the new video releases from Dave Butler's Bosko Video takes you back to a time when people actually did just that.

Follow the Bouncing Ball Volumes One and Two re-introduces audiences to a long-running cartoon series produced by the Fleischer Studio. Although part of the old U.M. & M syndication package and once a programming staple of local television stations, the Screen Song cartoons haven't been released by

Republic Home Video as the Betty Boop cartoons have. Butler sought out those Screen Songs that were in the public domain, and then found collectors who had prints. The results are two collections which will be of great interest to fans of the Fleischer Studio and classic 1930s animation. The print quality varies from fair to very good, and the video transfer is excellent with moderate window-boxing to insure a complete image.

The Screen Songs series was started by the Fleischer Studio in 1925. They were an outgrowth of a common feature found in many movie houses at the time, a sing-along with glass slides with the lyrics of a popular song projected onto the screen. The theater's orchestra, organist or pianist would provide the music for the number.

The Fleischers hit upon a technique that would allow them to direct an audience to sing along...a bouncing ball which would establish the beat and tell people what words they should be singing. Rather than animate the ball, the Fleischers glued a ping pong ball at the end of a dowel and painted the dowel black. The lyrics would be printed in white ink on black paper and mounted on a black circular drum. A cameraman would photograph one of the Fleischer staffers bouncing the ball over the printed lyrics and moving the drum to advance the next line.

There was plenty of animation in the silent Screen Songs (which were originally called Ko-Ko Song Car-Tunes), by the way, although the format of the cartoon allowed for greater

KOKO LEADS

HIS SONG CAR-TUNES
And your Audience Joins in!
The Hit on any Program

**BOOK THEM AT ONCE,
BEFORE YOUR
COMPETITOR
"BEATS YOU"
TO IT.**

RED SEAL

A trade advertisement for a 1926 Song Car-Tune.

repetition. Between the non-animated ball and the repeating scenes, these cartoons were less expensive to make than the studios' Ko-Ko shorts.

Despite their economy, the silent Screen Songs were a big hit with audiences and exhibitors. Their secret was featuring popular songs such as "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" and "Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly?" which people undoubtedly sung in their homes. It's easy to forget that having a musical instrument in a home, such as piano, was something far more common 60 years ago than today, and that playing and singing the popular songs of the day was as common as listening to one's CD player today.

The Screen Songs were the first cartoons which had sound-on-film synchronized soundtracks. Years before Disney's first experiment with sound, Max Fleischer collaborated with Dr. Lee DeForrest, the inventor of the vacuum tube and the developer of a sound process for motion pictures. Fleischer and DeForrest made several Screen Songs which were released with soundtrack for those theaters adventurous enough to be wired for DeForrest's system. Naturally, they were also released in silent versions.

While DeForrest proved himself to be ahead of his time, and was forced to discontinue his motion picture production, Fleischer's Screen Songs became a popular release from the studio which endured through 1937. The series underwent several changes in format as the two tapes attest.

Volume One presents 11 Screen Songs with the earliest, *Margie*, dating back to 1925, and presented with its DeForrest soundtrack. Shorter than the Ko-Kos, the silent Screen Songs were designed to highlight the song and little else. They not only featured the Bouncing Ball highlighting the lyrics, but then an animated segment with a cartoon character bouncing along the top the words. This segment was usually repeated twice, and oftentimes featured clever visual puns.

With the coming sound, the Screen Songs became little musicals with the song integrated into the action of an animated story. In *the Good Old Summertime* (1930), *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree* (1930), *La Paloma* (1931), *In My Merry Oldsmobile* (1931) and *I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now* (1932) all show this transitional stage. Like many early Fleischer talkies the studio's distinctive look hadn't quite yet gelled, although the pre-Production Code sensibilities certainly manifested themselves. In *The Shade of the Old Apple Tree* had the first and only breastfeeding gag I've seen in a cartoon, and a joke in which a character touches a woman's breast! In *My Merry Oldsmobile*, (which was actually an advertising short commissioned by the Oldsmobile people), there's noticeable cleavage, peeping toms, and implied sexual assault.

For me, the height of the Screen Song came in its next incarnation. The Fleischer Studios took advantage of its ties to Paramount Pictures and its New York location, and featured notable radio, Broadway and recording stars in live-action performances in their Screen Songs. Any fan of the popular music of the 1930s would love these cartoons for their presentation of these vintage artists.

These later Screen Songs tried to tie in the song and the artists themselves into the animated framing story. Sometimes the tie-ins were logical and sometimes they were oblique to say the least, but that was part of the fun. *When It's Sleepy Time Down South* (1932) featured the Boswell Sisters, the act after which the better-known Andrews Sisters patterned themselves. *Ain't She Sweet* (1933) featured an absolutely hyper Lillian Roth. The prize on this tape, though, is *Dinah* (1933) performed by the Mills Brothers. The popular quartet performed not only the title song, but the cartoon's entire musical track.

I have to admit I enjoyed *Volume One* much better than *Volume Two* because out of the eleven cartoons on the second tape four of them are without their song! Dave Butler said that one of the sources for his prints had edited the songs out because he was more interested in the animation than the music. This is regrettable, but until Republic Home Video puts out their own volume, this is the best representation of the Screen Songs available for fans.

This tape, though, really should be subtitled "The Best of Whiffle Piffle." Who or what was Whiffle Piffle? The character was developed as a supporting character in the Betty Boop series in the mid-Thirties, and can best be described as a case in which the parts are greater than the sum. A grotesque design, a wonderfully funny walk and a neat voice supplied by Jack Mercer were all part of Whiffle Piffle, but a personality wasn't part of the package. I do enjoy him, though, as a sort of guilty pleasure, and this tape has five Whiffle Piffle shorts.

Volume Two shows the last stage of the Screen Song in which there was far less of an effort to integrate the live-action performer into the story, and far less an attempt at a story! The Screen Songs began relying on a framework for spot gags. For instance, in this collection there are three shorts which feature take-offs on newsreels. The song is merely another feature on the cartoon screen. It's clear the series was running out of steam.

Among the highlights on *Volume Two* are *Reaching For the Moon* (1933) with the popular radio performer Arthur Tracy and *This Little Piggy Went to Market* with another radio favorite, Singing Sam. And of course, Whiffle Piffle. GMD

The Incredible 1930s Van Beuren Cartoons Volume Four: The Rainbow Parades #1

70 minutes; color

\$29.95

Bosko Video

The trials and tribulations of the Van Beuren Studio have been documented in past reviews, and this collection from Bosko Video features some cartoons which were included in the Kino On Video *Cartoons That Time Forgot* series. Again, the print quality varies from fair to good, while the video transfer is top-notch. The image is window-boxed.

The cartoons of the Van Beuren Studios are an acquired taste. While their contemporaries at Disney, Fleischer, and Iwerks definitely had recognizable styles, the animators at Van Beuren never seemed to successfully find their niche. The nine cartoons on this tape are a decent sampling of the best of the Van Beuren output in its last years. Of the nine cartoons on this tape, there are four which are new to home video, and they are excellent examples of campy 1930s animation.

The Rainbow Parades were the Van Beuren effort to compete with the Disney Silly Symphonies. Several of the productions on this tape are not in Technicolor, but rather in the red and blue process known as Cinecolor. These Cinecolor shorts are indeed rare, and, despite the limitations of that color process, the shorts are, for the most part, enjoyable.

A word to the wise, though, if you're diabetic, you might want to avoid a coma and fast-forward through the two Molly Moo Cow shorts. I didn't think anyone could make a more cloying cartoon than Disney until I saw these!

"Weird Al" Yankovic: The Ultimate Collection
\$19.99, Scotti Bros.

Alapalooza, The Videos

\$9.98, Scotti Bros.

As hard as it may be to believe, "Weird Al" Yankovic has been creating hysterical rock videos for over ten years now. Since his love of animation is legendary (During a 1992 MTV veejay shift, he substituted Ren and Stimpy footage for the Japanimation footage in Matthew Sweet's video, *Girlfriend!*), it's only natural that the guy whose self professed goal is to "slam a stapler into the forehead of popular culture" would someday do animated videos.

Well, that day has finally arrived with the release of *"Weird Al" Yankovic: The Ultimate Collection*, an expanded version of last year's popular *"Weird Al" Yankovic Video Library*. The thousands who bought the latter tape can supplement their collection with *Alapalooza, The Videos*, which features only the previously unreleased cuts. (I bought the two shorter tapes and paid approximately the cost of *The Ultimate Collection*.)

The main attraction of the new material is

Jurassic Park, a claymation parody of the film done to the tune of that dreadful old chestnut "MacArthur Park." Directed by Mark Osborne and Scott Nordlund, this video contains fairly graphic (for claymation) recreations of some of the movie's better known set pieces which take on bizarre new twists. Even the legendary lawyer eating sequence is lovingly played for laughs!

As a dinosaur lover, I appreciate that *Jurassic Park* is populated with scary looking thunder lizards doing silly things rather than cutesy Dino clones. They're better looking and much funnier. They also give wish fulfillment by doing in a certain unpopular purple guy (No, fellow "Weird Al" fans, not Prince!)

The claymation is as smooth and lovingly detailed as anything I've seen, and the likenesses of "Weird Al" members of the *Jurassic* cast, Steven Spielberg, etc., are dead on.

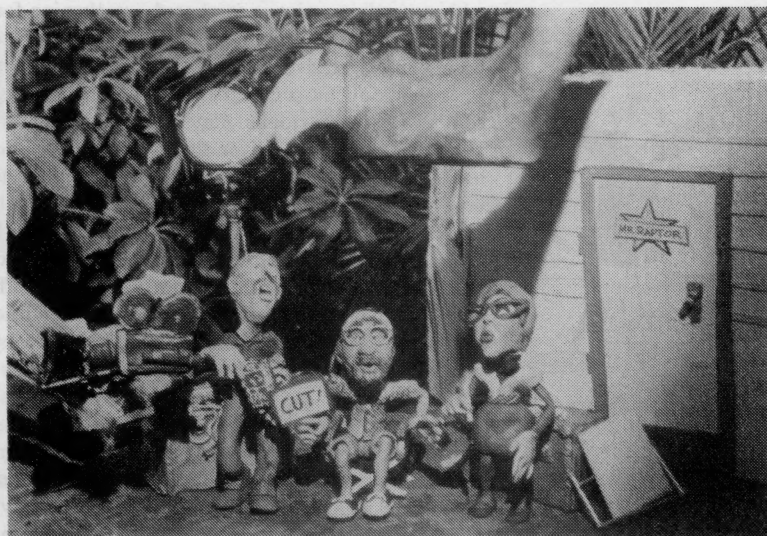
Despite the many reasons to like this video, apparently the powers that be at MTV don't share this writer's enthusiasm. Within a few weeks after its debut, both Yankovic's publicist and his fan club, the Midnight Star, sent out separate notices to fans stating that MTV would only continue to play *Jurassic Park* if there was a significant response on the MTV Request Line. (How would viewers know to request something that they'd never seen and didn't know existed in the first place?)

However, with the enthusiastic support of MTV's Canadian counterpart, Much Music, the song and video were huge hits in the Great White North. Perhaps this would explain why commercials on cable's Comedy Central for *The Ultimate Collection* proudly boasted the inclusion of the video for *Bedrock Anthem* before its premiere on MTV!

Anthem, which spoofs the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Under the Bridge" and "Give It Away", marks the first time Yankovic has directed himself. (Previously, he used electronic wizardry and a bunch of I Love Lucy clips to create a modern looking and sounding Desi Arnaz video called *Babaloo Music*).

Yankovic's *Bedrock* is a black and white mixture of footage from *The Flintstones* (cartoon version) and the minimalist settings of the Chili Peppers' videos. How well does it work? Just catch the shot of a very baffled looking Fred and Barney watching a television broadcast of Al and his band decked out in punk caveman finery!

Admittedly, you'd have to have seen the video for *Give It Away* to understand the frequent



"Weird Al" Yankovic sends up *Jurassic Park* in style in his latest video collection. (Photo Credit: Johnny Buzzerio; © Scotti Brothers)

cutaways to close ups of Yankovic's gradually de-evolving mouth, but the target audience for the video has no doubt memorized its source material frame by frame. Most of the other gags involve aspects of *The Flintstones* that are almost a race memory: The Loyal Order of Water Buffalos, musical instruments made out of bone, living creatures doubling as home appliances, etc.

The miracle of special effects allows Al and the band the chance to interact with the animated footage. There's even a shot where Al's mouth is superimposed over Fred's, a la Clutch Cargo

The tapes also feature the theme from Al's 1989 feature film *UHF*, which combines parodies of classic rock videos with clips from the movie. (If this makes you want to rent *UHF*, give in to the temptation. It's a terrific little movie!)

Rounding out the collection is the seldom-seen, unedited version of 1992's *You Don't Love Me Anymore*, which features a guest appearance by Robert Goulet, who has a much better sense of humor about himself than one would expect. A tender ballad with lyrics like "You used to think I was nice/Now you tell all your friends that I'm the AntiChrist....." "You Don't Love Me Anymore" reveals "Weird Al's" most shocking secret...He has a better singing voice than most of the people he parodies!

It also illustrates the main reason why people should shell out money for the tapes when MTV has already broadcast everything on them. In every broadcast I have seen, nearly thirty seconds were deleted, presumably for time. The final gags in *Jurassic Park* and *UHF* have also been trimmed on several occasions, although not as severely.

These tapes give viewers a chance to see the material as it was meant to be seen, and that's always a good recommendation. **Judith Rebov**

Rugrats: Chuckie The Brave
Sony Wonder LV49220
45 minutes, \$14.98

In the rush to sound the praises of *Ren and Stimpy*, many media types have ignored one of the other Nicktoons, and ignored it unjustly. *Rugrats* is a consistently inventive and funny show with a time-worn premise that in the hands of the Klasky-Csupo animation house becomes fresh again...stories told from the perspective of little kids.

Yes, after the *Look Who's Talking* movies, countless television skits and commercials, one might think this kind of storyline is a bit played out. But thanks to clever design, solid writing and great voice characterizations, *Rugrats* is a treat. The animation is a

little stiff, but the show is head and shoulders above the typical Saturday morning fare.

Unlike the somewhat sordid weirdness of *Ren and Stimpy*, and the gross-out slapstick of *Rosco's ModernLife*, *Rugrats* is a more story and characterization-based series featuring gentle and frequently subtle cartoons.

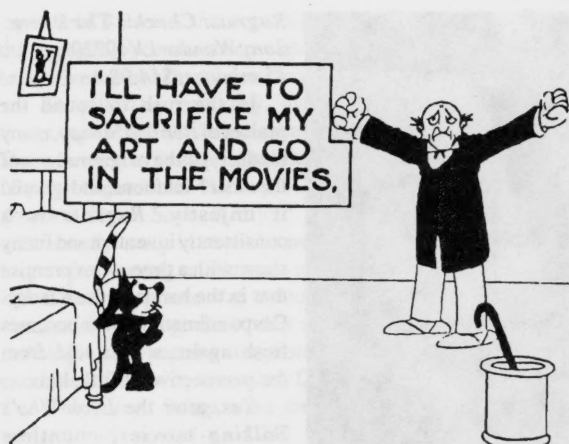
This tape features the mis-adventures of Chuckie, who at age two sees danger everywhere. For those of us who imagined monsters under the bed, Chuckie's dilemmas will strike a familiar chord as well as your funny bone. **GMD**

Felix!
Lumivision #LDV9308, CAV, 2 sides
\$39.95, 51m 30s.

The praises sung of the silent adventures of Otto Messmer's feisty feline in John Canemaker's *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat* (Pantheon, 1991) stimulated a broad interest in Messmer's work that no doubt helped facilitate this laserdisc release. I approached *Felix!* anticipating the timeless, ground-breaking synthesis of character animation, graphic design, comedy, and surrealism invoked by Canemaker's comprehensive tribute.

The program consists of Felix's debut in *Feline Follies* (1919), *Felix Saves the Day* (1922), *Felix in Hollywood* (1923) which presages the plethora of sound era shorts in which cartoon characters frolic with awkward caricatures of movie stars, *Felix Dopes It Out* (1924), *Futuritzzy* (1928), *Comicalamites* (1928), and *Felix Woos Whoopee* (1928 or 1930).

This selection provides little evidence of Messmer's reputed importance to the development of personality animation. Other than a predilection for problem-solving, Felix seems to lack consistent character traits. While his signature brooding



A frame from *Felix in Hollywood* (1923). (Courtesy of Milestone Film and Video)

walk denotes thought, the nature of that cogitation remains opaque. Felix's broad, often rigid, mugging indicates his emotional state in only the most telegraphic terms.

The 1919-24 films are marked by a surprising lack of technical sophistication, even considering their age. There's little simultaneous interaction between characters; when one figure emotes, the other freezes in a receptive (or reactive) pose. A reliance on intertitles and voice balloons in the early efforts periodically brings the action to a halt. In addition, Messmer's practice of working

without a written script or storyboard evinces itself in the shorts' haphazard pacing and digressive plotlines.

Some of the cramped staging of the earlier cartoons may be attributed to the Pat Sullivan studio method of inking the animation drawings on paper, with backgrounds rendered as line drawings on overlay cels. Caution had to be exercised in layout, to prevent characters from walking through background objects. Thus, the action tends to unfold in bald white areas bordered by simple scenery

Comicalamities and *Felix Woos Whoopee* display levels of imagination and narrative fluidity only hinted at in the earlier films. In *Comicalamities*, the ever-resourceful

Felix manipulates his cartoon universe with elan, stretching apart a prematurely closing iris, enlisting the Godlike hand of the animator to pull the fur coat off a recalcitrant black bear, and spitefully tearing an ungrateful, snubish she-cat from the page. Gray values (largely absent from the earlier shorts) are used to dramatic effect when Felix calls upon the artist to pour ink into the ocean to provide a smokescreen for his flight from the monstrous inhabitants of the ocean floor.

A sort of animated *Lost Weekend*, the nightmarish *Woos Whoopee* envisions a grim

reckoning for the libertine excesses of the Jazz Age, mirrored in Felix producer Pat Sullivan's own alcoholism and reckless womanizing. Here, Messmer deploys metamorphosis akin to that practiced by comic strip artist Cliff Sterrett (*Polly and Her Pals*) to depict the vertigo and hallucinations accompanying a case of the D.T.'s.

This anthology's dearth of program notes constitutes an egregious oversight in the presentation of historic film. Animation from this era can be difficult for contemporary audiences to assess without some understanding of the techniques by which it was achieved, and the context of its production.

Felix!'s most baffling inclusion is a two and a half minute segment titled "Otto Messmer At Work," apparently a home movie dating from his 1937-73 tenure designing electric signs for Leigh-EPOK. The viewer is left to guess what Messmer is working on (some sort of silhouette of a Toreador and wounded bull), and the relevance (if any) of this work to his career in animation.

R.J. Miller (who scored *Winsor McCay: Animator*) receives sole credit for "original music", but only the soundtracks for the three earliest films could possibly be his work. Miller's digital honkytonk stylings provide a stealthy, playful counterpoint to the screen action, but his choice of overtly electronic timbres is distressingly anachronistic. The music and effects tracks for

Continued on Page 69

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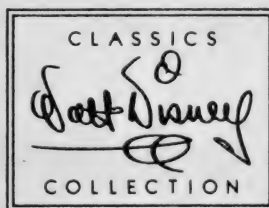
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TOON NEWS

Klasky Csupo, Inc. Creates New Show for Nickelodeon

The newest Nicktoon will be *Real Monsters*, debuting this fall on the cable network. The series follows the exploits of a group of monsters attending monster school, a place where the elite of the monster world learn the fine art of scaring people. The show was created by Gabor Csupo and Peter Gaffney, and the directors include Igor Kovalyov and Jim Duffy. Thirteen (an appropriate number for this show) episodes have been ordered so far.

Schoolhouse Rock Makes a Comeback

Even an august journal such as *The New York Times* has started covering animation. In April, *The Times* wrote about the re-discovery of the venerated *Schoolhouse Rock* series which taught grammar, math and civics to a generation of young couch potatoes. ABC is now bringing the series back, and will produce new episodes. They can be seen at 11:25 and 11:55 a.m. Saturdays. (A tip of the clipping scissors to Virginia Mercer!)

New Disney Video Releases Announced

New Disney releases for the fall will include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, scheduled to hit the streets in late October. Suggested retail will be \$26.99, and expect *Snow White* to be discounted at major retailers. Like other Disney features on video, there will be a moratorium, although the movies should be available well past Christmas.

Accompanying the regular *Snow White* release will be a limited edition deluxe video set which will include a "making of" documentary, a hard-cover book on the production of the film, and ten lithographs of the original theatrical posters. The suggested retail price will be \$79.99.

Disney Home Video will be re-releasing non-Disney animated film *The Brave Little Toaster* in August with a suggested price of \$22.99.

Mark the first week of October as the day *Nightmare Before Christmas* will become available. Suggested price is \$19.95.

And the company will distribute the DIC television series *Superhuman Samurai Syber-Squad* sometime in November.

Congratulations, Gary Fields!

ANIMATO! cover artist Gary Fields is now the inker on the Marvel comic book adaptation of *Rocko's Modern Life*. The book is a faithful recreation of one of our favorite series.



AnimEigo Releases to Hit the Streets

AnimEigo has announced the following releases for July:

Urusei Yatsura Movie LD #6 (laser disc) - Another Space Princess, Lupica, appears and abducts Ataru! Lum and friends Okyki and Bente give chase. It turns out that Lupica doesn't want Ataru for his great looks or charming personality, but to tap his lust to make the greatest love potion in the galaxy. Suggested retail price of \$54.95.

Urusei Yatsura TV Vol. 14 Episodes 51-54 - Jaritan meets Kotatsu (giant white half-ghost kitty), and invites him home. Upon seeing the heater table, the ghost kitty cuddles up to it and refuses to move. It turns out the half-ghost cat died of the cold and that's why he wants heat! Also includes Lum-chan's Great Year-End

Celebration episode. Suggested retail price of \$39.95

Golden Films to Release The Jungle King

Golden Films and Sony Wonder will release a 48-minute made-for-video "feature" entitled *The Jungle King*. With a clamshell box and Disney-esque character design (with the central character being a lion), some cynical observers might think this video is trying to capitalize on Disney's *The Lion King*.....coooooould be!

The Princess and The Goblin in Stores by the Fall

Hemdale's *The Princess and The Goblin* (reviewed in the last issue of ANIMATO!) is receiving a theatrical release to about 1,500 American movie screens early this summer. By the company's promotional materials sent to video stores, it's clear, though, the theatrical release is only to give the film some sort of name recognition for the video release which is slated for the fall. According to their sales predictions, Hemdale expects to sell 3,500,000 units or as many as all of the copies sold of *The Tom and Jerry Movie* and *Little Nemo* combined!

Fritz The Cat Back on Video

A small video company, Badcat Entertainment, has announced the release of Ralph Bakshi's *Fritz the Cat*, and the non-Bakshi sequel *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*. When told about the new release (*Fritz* was licensed to Warner Brothers home video, and has been long out of print), Bakshi said he hadn't heard anything about it!

New Book on Popeye

Fred Grandinetti, co-founder of the Popeye Fan Club, is the author of a new book for McFarland entitled *Popeye: An Illustrated History of E.C. Segar's Character in Print, Radio, Television and Film Appearances, 1929-1993*. The price will be \$32.50.

And, by the way, ANIMATO! heartily endorses this organization if you're a die-hard Popeye fan (as we are). Dues are just \$8.00 for one year (\$12.00 outside the USA) and club headquarters are at 5995 Stage Rd. Suite 151,

Barlett, TN, 38134.

A New Kind of Animation Art

The Coca-Cola Company has authorized the sale of artwork taken from their highly acclaimed commercial featuring Coke-chugging polar bears. Marketed by Name That Toon, the computer-generated digital image is printed onto acetate cels. Each piece is hand-numbered (with an edition of 2,000) and is framed and matted. The retail price is \$198.00

Harold Walker Dies

Former Pat Sullivan and Fleischer Studios animator Harold Walker passed away on March 11 in a retirement community near his home in Punta Gorda, Florida. He had suffered a series of strokes since November.

Walker began his career assisting Otto Messmer on the popular *Felix the Cat* series in 1919. He remained

Continued on Page 69



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A Report From Great Britain

TOONS 'N' TEA



by Andrew Osmond

In the midst of an otherwise disappointing Oscar ceremony, the Brits were consoled by the sight of Nick Park winning a deserved award for his Hitchcockian thriller, *The Wrong Trousers*. (He'd previously won awards for the short at Venice and Chicago.) Three of the other nominees were British: Mark Baker (*The Village*), Stephen Palmer (*Blindscape*) and Bob Godfrey (*Small Talk*). All bar Godfrey are graduates of the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, and owe much to the backing of minority channels BBC2 and Channel 4 (described by Park as "the lifeblood for animators").

Predictable, there's been great interest in this one corner of the British film industry that's actually doing well; in fact, I've started to dread turning on the TV in case I see that train-chase again! Park has done the full round of interviews (arts shows, kids' programmes, you name them, he's on them), while the papers have been out analysing his idiosyncrasies and techniques (*Grand Day Out* took six years to make). Incidentally, readers may be interested to know the co-writer on *The Wrong Trousers* was Bob Baker, who previously scripted episodes of the cult *Doctor Who*. The co-animator was Steve Box, who worked on the kiddie plasticine series *Trap Door* as well as *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*. *Wrong Trousers* is currently riding high on the video charts.

To Park's credit, he's firmly resisted efforts to turn Wallace and Gromit into factory fodder, despite one American company asking for a 26-part series with the duo. (Maybe by 2050, Gus...) However, there are rumours of a "large-format" sequel in the works, possibly as long as seventy minutes. In the meantime, the last words must go to Park, recently asked what his cartoon creations would make of their new Oscar, "I think Gromit would raise his eyebrows and look disapproving" Park confesses, "but Wallace would think it was reecealy great."

Some historical notes: Aardman Animations

was founded in the early seventies by David Sproxton and Peter Lord. Nick Park joined the company in 1985. Park had already made a name for himself in animation, selling his film *Archie's Concrete Nightmares* to the BBC at the tender age of seventeen. Aardman gave him the funding to complete *A Grand Day Out*, as well as commissioning him to do an episode of *Lipsynch*, in which puppets mimed "real people". Park's contribution was, of course, *Creature Comforts*.

Aardman have been involved in numerous other projects over the years, including children's television inserts and a host of commercials. MTV fans might remember their superb *Sledgehammer* video with Peter Gabriel.

News too from S4C's Siriol Studio, previously known for projects as diverse as *Superted*, the maligned *Loch-Nagar* (am I the only person who likes this colourful cartoon?) and a feature based on Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. Their most famous product, however, has to be Chris Grace's *Animated Shakespeare* series, co-produced with Soyuzmult film and Christmas films in Moscow. Funding came from England, Japan and America's HBO, making the series a truly international collaboration. The standard of the programmes is variable (a fact reflected in the reviews), but the best are really good, including a magical puppet adaptation of *The Tempest*, and a darkly expressionist *Macbeth*. Top of the heap is *Hamlet*, presented via a hitherto unknown medium "painting on glass", the final result of which resembles a moving oil-painting.

Now they're at it again. This March, *The Barber of Seville* previewed on BBC2, the first in a new series of Animated Operas. The others will be screened this Autumn. After that, it's back to Shakespeare, and then some stories from the Old Testament. Is there nothing these people can't do?

Cosgrove Hall (*Duckula*, *Dangermouse*,

Wind in Willows, *BFG*, *Truckers*.....hey, lay off) are now affiliated with Anglia Television Entertainment, a joint venture between Anglia Television and Home Box Office. The main reason for this link-up is that C-H will be provided access to ITEL, an international distributor owned by the two corporations. In the animators' words, "Now we can look forward to a worldwide reach....the association will bring new business areas for feature films and multi-media, as well as conventional TV."

The loss of Thames TV's financial support (a side-effect of the franchises) led to a slump for the animation company, but things are starting to look brighter. C-H are now midway through a model *Noddy* series for the BBC, based on Enid Blyton's notorious books. (However, Noddy and Big Ears no longer sleep in the same bed, and goblins have replaced the politically dubious golliwogs.) Other upcoming projects include another season of *Avenger Penguins* and a live-action/animated series called *The Day after Tomorrow*. Further episodes of *Dangermouse*, *Duckula* and *Truckers* may appear, subject to demand.

Fascinating fact: Mark Hall recalled how Nickelodeon objected to a *Duckula* episode, *Mississippi Duck*, which C-H had specially targetted at the American market. They claimed the average American viewer wasn't capable of picking up on steamboat jokes and Tom Sawyer references....More generally, Hall confesses he's mystified by the appeal of *Dangermouse* and *Duckula*, with their very British sense of humour, to the US public. Can ANIMATO! readers shed light on the subject?

UPDATE: That delightful duo, Beavis and Butt-head, have skulked onto UK television in the unenviable slot of 11:30 p.m. With most

Continued on Page 69

The Incredible 1930s Featuring TOM & JERRY



"Probably the strangest and most obscure tape that Bosko Video puts out... If you yearn for the rarest of the rare, here it is!"

—STEPHEN WORTH, STORYBOARD

"Van Beuren Volume One" contains many rare jems not seen in almost 60 years. They feature two little guys, "Tom & Jerry". They contain ethnic stereotypes, which were prevalent in the 1930's. Titles are: "Wot A Night", "Trouble", "Jungle Jam", "A Swiss Trick", "Rocketeers", "Rabid Hunters", "In The Bag", "Pots And Pans" and "Grandfather's Clock", a part live-action cartoon. 70 Minutes

UNCENSORED BOSKO VOLUME 2

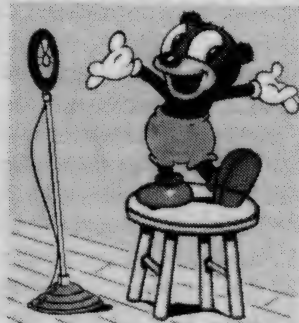
"Some of Bosko's best cartoons! You won't find better copies anywhere else!"

—Stephen Worth, Video Inc. on Film



"Bosko Volume Two" contains "Sinking In The Bathtub", "Hold Anything", "Box Car Blues", "Ain't Nature Grand", "Dumb Patrol", "Bosko's Holiday", "Bosko Shipwrecked!", "Bosko's Soda Fountain", "Bosko At The Zoo". 67 1/2 minutes

The Incredible 1930s Featuring CUBBY BEAR



"Cubby has never looked and sounded so good!"

—STEPHEN WORTH, STORYBOARD

"Van Beuren Volume Two" brings you the first nine "Cubby" cartoons made in the early thirties. Titles are: "Opening Night", "Love's Labor Won", "The Last Mail", "Bubbles and Troubles", "Barking Dogs", "Fresh Ham", "Indian Whoopee", "Nut Factory", "World Flight". 67 Minutes

The COMPLETE UNCENSORED Private SNAFU

More Rare Cartoons from World War II



"Uncensored Pvt. Snafu Volume Two" contains "The Chow Hound", "Censored", "Outpost", "Payday", "Target Snafu", "A Few Quick Facts: Inflation", "Three Brothers", "In the Aleutions", "A Few Quick Facts: Fear", "It's Murder She Says", "Hot Spot", "Operation Snafu", "No Buddy Atoll", "Private Snafu Presents Seaman Tarful". 73 Minutes

The Incredible 1930s Featuring THE LITTLE KING



"These originals were believed to have been lost, but Bosko Video has scoured the country to restore and compile a definitive collection!"

—STEPHEN WORTH, STORYBOARD

"Van Beuren Volume Three" contains eleven rare Little King cartoons. Titles are: "A Dizzy Day", "AM to PM", "The Fatal Note", "5 Pals", "Jest of Honor", "Jolly Good Felons", "Sultan Pepper", "A Royal Good Time", "Art for Art's Sake", "Cactus King". 84 Minutes

The COMPLETE UNCENSORED Private SNAFU VOLUME ONE

CARTOONS FROM WORLD WAR II



"Uncensored Pvt. Snafu Volume One" contains "Coming! Snafu!", "Gripes", "Spies", "The Goldbrick", "The Infantry Blues", "Fighting Tools", "The Home Front", "Rumors", "Booby Traps", "Snafuperman", "Snafu vs. Malaria Mike", "A Lecture On Camouflage", "Gas" and "Going Home". These rare films were made by Warner Bros. for the Armed Forces during WWII. These were animated by the great Warner directors, and voiced by Mel Blanc. 62 minutes



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THE WORST OF DAFFY DUCK

Harry McCracken ventures where few animation fans dare to tread...really odd, really bad, and really forgotten cartoons!

by Harry McCracken

In this ANIMATO! column — named in tribute to the Chuck Jones Saturday-morning series of the early 1970s — I'll discuss some of most obscure cartoons I know about. A few may be undeservedly forgotten gems; others will have been forgotten for perfectly good reasons. None of them will ever be adapted in major live-action films, shown on the Cartoon Network, or become the subject of a coffee-table book. Some of them may be available on video, but I'll also write about films so unremembered in the public memory that only crazy collectors of old 16mm films (like myself) will come across them today.

Why am I — along with many other long-standing animation fans of my acquaintance — interested in this stuff? I don't love *Pinocchio*, *One Froggy Evening*, or *Minnie the Moocher* any less than I ever did, but I've seen them each at least a hundred times. It's fairly rare for me to come across a cartoon from the 1930s or 1940s that I haven't seen yet. When I do, the thrill of discovery can be a delight, even when the

artistic experience isn't.

More often than not, I'll be discussing theatrical animation that's at least forty years old, but this time is an exception — because there can't be many better candidates to inaugurate a column on obscure cartoons than *Daffy Duck and Porky Pig Meet the Groovie Ghoulies*. As its title suggests, this 1972 TV show presents perhaps the worst animation team-up of all time: the Warner Bros. greats and the Groovie Ghoulies,

dismissals as a challenge.

The show was produced by Filmation and bears only its copyright; Warner Bros. doesn't seem to have had anything to do with it, except for making the ill-advised decision to loan out its creations to a studio and a director (Filmation workhorse Hal Sutherland) that were completely unable to them justice. It aired as an episode of the *Saturday Superstar Movie*, an ABC series that presented such animated "events" as

revivals of Yogi Bear and Popeye and cartoons based on *Nanny and the Professor*, *The Banana Splits*, and *Lassie*. In its own way, this particular show was an auspicious moment for the Warner Bros. characters, since it was their first significant appearance (except for in commercials) since the Warner cartoon studio had finally died in 1969.

Of course, this was 1972, before

anyone outside of a small group of oddball fans considered Warner Bros. animation to be high art. Within a few years, Warner would be producing frequent prime-time specials and several theatrical compilations starring its characters, but for the moment, it was a very fallow period for the Looney Tunes gang and animation in general — so we shouldn't be surprised that they made their comeback in a vehicle as cheesy as this one.

Here's the plot: Daffy Duck is in



Rare animation art from the Daffy Duck episode of *The Groovie Ghoulies*. ANIMATO! thanks Joe Cesaro of Sunday Funnies, Inc. for his help in obtaining this artwork. (© 1971 Filmation Associates)

Filmation's low-rent Munster rip-offs who co-starred with Sabrina the Teenage Witch in their own show.

Almost always, this program goes unmentioned in books and articles on the history of Warner Bros. animation. In those rare instances when it's covered, it tends to be with terse comments like that of Steve Schneider in *That's All Folks*: "The less said about this work, the better." Part of me agrees with him, but the other half — the half that writes this column — takes such

Hollywood, producing a movie about King Arthur's roundtable that stars himself, Porky, Foghorn Leghorn, Tweety and Sylvester, Petunia Pig, Yosemite Sam, Elmer Fudd, Pepe Le Pew, the Road Runner and Coyote, and Charlie Dog. Bugs Bunny is conspicuous by his absence, as was also the case with the Warner Bros. cartoons produced by Depatie-Freleng in the 1960s. (This may have something to do with the fact that Mel Blanc charged a heavy premium for performing Bugs's voice.)

Suddenly, a ghoulish villain called the Phantom of the Flickers appears on TV, promising to "destroy every frame of film Daffy Duck and his friends ever made, including their full-length flop, 'King Arthur!'" The Groovie Ghoulies — Drac, Frankie, Wolfie, Mummy, and Hagatha — happen to be watching. Being great Daffy Duck fans, they set off for Hollywood to foil the Phantom's plot. From then on, the show mixes King Arthur gags and ones about rescuing Daffy from the Phantom indiscriminately, occasionally bearing a slight resemblance to Chuck Jones's later *A Connecticut Rabbit in King Arthur's Court* special.

Despite the presence of the Warner characters, this is unmistakably a Filimation product. The extremely limited animation, tinny music, and almost constant laughtrack — something that Daffy and Porky have rarely needed to stoop to — are all of a piece with *The Archies*, *Fat Albert*, and other Filimation series of the 1970s. For no particular reason, the show ends with a weird live-action sequence of the Ghoulies, starring Chuck Menville and Len Janson, the show's writers.

The one thing you can say in Filimation's favor is that they appear to have put some effort into drawing the Warner characters faithfully. As bad as the animation is, Porky, Daffy, and the rest are recognizably themselves.

Some of Mel Blanc's performances, however, are alarmingly off — more so than in the work he did years later for more ambitious projects. (Strangely, his Daffy voice is sped way up, so he sounds more like the earliest, 1930s Daffy than more recent incarnations.) Other than Blanc, the only veteran of the Warner studio whose name I recognized in the credits was animator Virgil Ross.

At least two of the *Saturday Superstar Movies* — the Yogi Bear and Lassie ones — became full-fledged series of their own. This one didn't, thankfully. Filimation's first attempt at animating the Looney Tunes crew was their last. When more Warner specials were made, beginning in the mid-1970s, they were made by Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, and other Warner Bros. experts. The results weren't always thrilling, but at least Daffy and Porky were back working with the directors who knew them best. 

Harry McCracken, ANIMATO!'s editor from 1987-1991, is an independent writer who covers multimedia and other topics for publications such as *PC World*, *Multimedia World*, and *Digital Video*. Know of any weird cartoons that he should cover in this column? Write him c/o ANIMATO!. Thanks to Mark Evanier for providing some background information that proved helpful in preparing this installment.

YOUNG READERS' REVIEW

By Stephanie McFarland

Beavis and Butt-Head continue to grow in popularity as more and more kids notice these two disruptive teenagers. Although they were once more offensive, the writers seem to be reducing the profanity and violence and overall roughness of the cartoon. However, Beavis and Butt-Head still obviously enjoy keeping their reputations as "bad boys." They are unpolished, uninformed and crude - almost like animals in a way - grunting all the time with their famous Heh Heh M Heh Heh..and..Huh Huh Huh. But whatever they do, they're funny and they make kids laugh.

Beavis and Butt-Head go to Highland High School. It looks like they'll be there for awhile. They are always getting notes sent home from their teachers and the school psychiatrists. They are total losers. They have major disciplinary problems - like setting off firecrackers in school. Sometimes I think they're so stupid that they don't even know what they're doing. When Mr. Anderson wanted the limbs cut off the tree, they could do it quicker if they just cut the whole tree down. They thought they were doing something so good that when Mr. Anderson came by they even asked him if they could have a little more money for doing such a fine job.

During the cartoon, Beavis and Butt-Head review heavy metal music videos. This seems kind of boring, and I don't really like that part of the cartoon and it's hard to hear what they're saying over all the loud music. I also don't like the violence in the cartoon. It's really not the funny part of the cartoon anyway. The funny parts are when they do really dumb stuff and they think they're cool even when they are obviously not.

There has been a lot of disagreement, though with the fact that parents don't like kids watching it because of the violence. I agree with this. But even though these two "dillweeds" lack a lot in the brain department, pick their noses, and are sometimes violent, the fact is, in spite of these problems, Beavis and Butt-Head continue to make kids laugh.

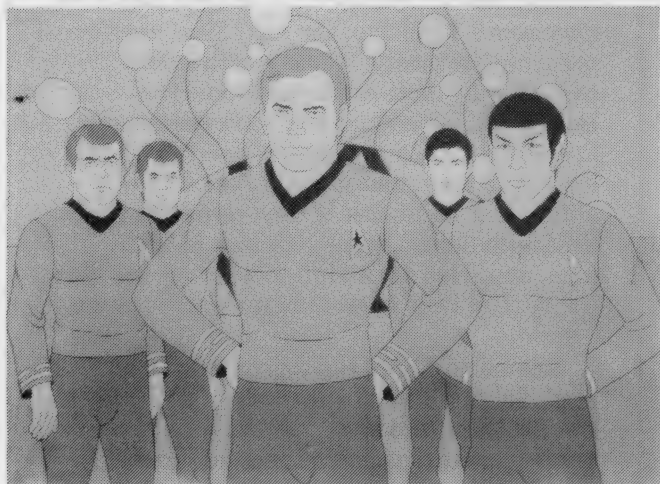
Stephanie McFarland of Olney, Maryland is our youngest reviewer and contributing artist. Stephanie is eleven years-old. Check out Issue 28 for her original drawings on the Young Readers' Page.

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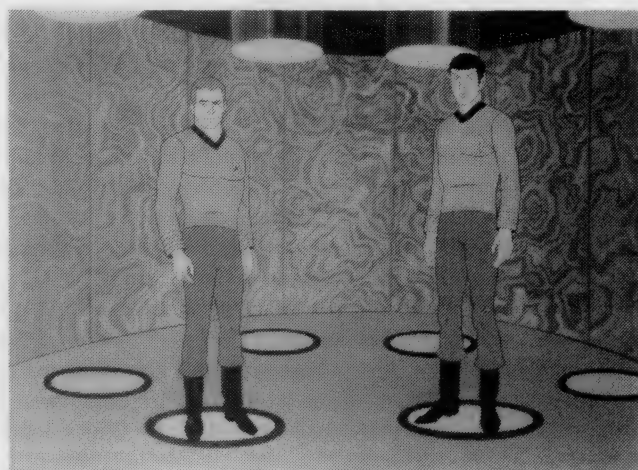
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All cels signed by William Shatner (Kirk)
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Animation Preservation Report

Historian Jere Guldin begins a new column on saving animation's past

By Jere Guldin

"Even as you read this, cartoons are dying."

That's the opening line to the informational brochure about the Animation Preservation Project. It's a true statement. The disease that attacks cartoons is a combination of neglect, lack of funds, and the deteriorating effects of nitrocellulose film.

The Animation Preservation Project is an attempt to remedy that. Inaugurated in 1991 by the International Animated Film Society, ASIFA-Hollywood, the Animation Preservation Project was begun to ensure that animation of the past is not lost to audiences of the future.

Why should you care?

If you're reading this magazine, you certainly must enjoy cartoons. And unless a cartoon is carefully stored and preserved, it may someday no longer be available for your viewing. Prior to 1950, the film stock in use by the motion picture was nitrocellulose, or nitrate film. It was—and is—highly flammable, and countless thousands of unique nitrate films perished in vault fires over the years. In addition, nitrate decomposes over time, turning to goo to powder inside its cans, which has caused many more subjects to be lost. Others were junked by their owners as being worthless, or simply to reclaim the silver content from the the emulsion.

It is estimated that nearly half of all films produced prior to 1950 no longer are in existence, and the percentage is higher for pictures from the silent film era. Those same figures can be applied to animated subjects as well. Gone forever are *Fun from the Press*, *A Pirate for a Day*, *Mississippi Mud*, and *Birth of a Flivver*. If you don't recognize the films, you'll certainly recognize the filmmakers: Max Fleischer, Walt Disney, Walter Lantz and Willis O'Brien respectively.

Now, the above listed titles may have been great films or they might have been stinkers; chances are good that most lost films are the latter, and not the former. The problem is we'll never know if J.R. Bray's *Bud and Tommy Take a Day Off*, Hy Mayer's *Such is Life at Coney Island*, and the remainder of the 90 percent of lost silent animated subjects were any good or not.

Many of the films currently exist may not be around for much longer either, or they might wind up existing only in inferior quality copies. The original nitrate negative to the Technicolor Fleischer two-reel short *A Cartoon Travesty of the Raven* is decomposing even now, and the only

colorprinting material on it remains in 16mm, not 35mm. The Flip the Frog cartoon, *Coo Coo the Magician* by Ub Iwerks, exists only in 16mm, the original negative having been discarded inadvertently just a few years ago. No 35mm negatives exist at all on the Iwerks Comicolor cartoon, *Little Boy Blue*; a single nitrate print is all that's around in 35mm, and printing errors rendered the last half of it unusable.

These aren't lost cartoons, so you might think that, if they're around in 16mm, as many are, or can be seen on video, what's the big deal? For one thing, 35mm prints struck from the original negatives are far better in quality. Since the size of the 16mm film frame is about a quarter that of 35mm, the clarity is lessened proportionately, the grain is increased, and the colors are not as vivid. Video currently doesn't have even the image resolution of 16mm. As Leonard Maltin put it, when viewing a preserved 35mm print of *Poor Cinderella* for the first time:

"...I gasped; I felt as if I'd never seen the film before...the sharpness and clarity were magnificent, and so was the color."

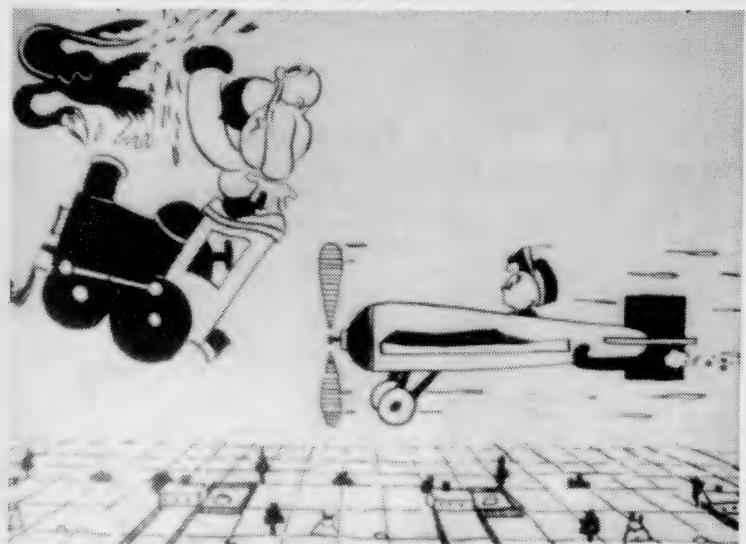
To elicit that sort of response is the best reason for wanting to preserve cartoons. Unfortunately, film preservation takes a lot of money. Black and white sound shorts cost around \$1,500.00, while a seven-minute Technicolor subject runs in the \$5,000.00 neighborhood. That's why many cartoons still have not been adequately preserved. The big studios, like Disney, are making commendable efforts toward ensuring that all of its titles are well covered. But the smaller companies often can't afford to preserve their

holdings properly, or sometimes don't care to do so.

That's where the Animation Preservation Project steps in. Its goal is to raise funds necessary for saving unique copies of animated works, and ensure that the best-quality versions are preserved. Word about the Animation Preservation Project has been spread through notices in *The Whole Toon Catalog* and *Animation Journal*, at various festivals and conventions, through an article by Leonard Maltin filed with Prodigy, the online computer network, and in a PSA produced and aired by The Cartoon Network. Regular screenings are held in Hollywood that benefit preservation. The most recent event, earlier this year, showcased the silent film work of the late Walter Lantz, with the producer himself in attendance making his final public appearance. Individual contributions to the Animation Preservation Project include Disney animator Tom Sito, animation historian Jerry Beck, actor and television personality Tom Hatten, composer and conductor Fred Steiner, one of the legends of animation Ollie Johnston and former ANIMATO! editor Harry McCracken.

This has led to over \$5,000.00 being raised for film preservation, enabling eight cartoons to be preserved as a result. Some of the preserved cartoons are incomplete. None of them are classics; in fact, some aren't much good at all. Most are unique, or at least unique in 35mm. All of them are exactly the sort of neglected work that needs rescuing. Listed below are the titles, in chronological order, with a bit of background on each.

I'm Insured (1916): This may be the only



A frame enlargement from *Scrambled Eagles*. (Courtesy of UCLA Film and Television Archives)



A frame enlargement from *Old King Cole*. (Courtesy of UCLA Film and Television Archives)

surviving subject in a 55 film series known as *Kartoon Komiks*, all of which were directed and animated by Harry S. Palmer.

Rastus - In Court! (1916): *Rastus* was a comic strip about the misadventures of a little African-American boy. Live action *Rastus* shorts were filmed around the same time as this animated subject, of which only the first half remains, however.

Scrambled Eagles (1920) *Jerry on the Job* was one of numerous comic strips turned into a cartoon series during the latter part of the 'Teens. Although a respectable number of *Jerry on the Job* cartoons survive, most do so only in 16mm. The series entry was directed by Vernon Stallings,

and probably animated by Walter Lantz.

The Gump Review (ca. 1926): Several silent cartoons and, later, a live-action series were produced based on *The Gumps* comic strip, but not many of them exist. Here's one that does.

Old King Cole (1926): A silent version of the nursery rhyme done in silhouette animation, a la Lotte Reiniger and Tony Sarg, this is actually a promotional short subject produced for Christmas Seals. Animator and production company are unknown.

Farmyard Fables (1928): Only two of the four silent Oswald the Lucky Rabbit cartoons directed by Walter Lantz survive, and this is one of them. Unfortunately, more than half of the

cartoon is missing due to nitrate decomposition.

Confidence (1933): Easily one of the best of the early sound Oswald cartoons, this snappy short, directed by Lantz and "Bill" Nolan, has the rabbit join forces with FDR to combat the Depression.

Scrappy's Puppet Theatre (1938): This short promotional piece features the Columbia cartoon star, Scrappy, exhorting kids to go to their local movie house to pick up the Scrappy's Puppet Theater toy giveaway. Child actress Edith Fellows demonstrates how to play with it in live-action.

These eight titles, are literally, just a drop in the bucket. Hundreds, if not thousands, of cartoons still awaiting rescue. But time is running out, and too many subjects are decomposing even now.

You can help. Contributions to the Animation Preservation Project are tax-deductable, and every cent raised goes directly to lab costs, with all preservation work being handled by the UCLA Film and Television Archive. Funding currently is being sought for preservation of the George Pal Puppetoon *Sky Princess*; any size donation is necessary and welcome, and will be acknowledged. If you're interested in contributing, make your check payable to ASIFA-Hollywood, and write "Animation Preservation Project" on the memo line. Send or contributions or questions to ASIFA-Hollywood, Animation Preservation Project, P.O. Box 787, Burbank, CA 91503.



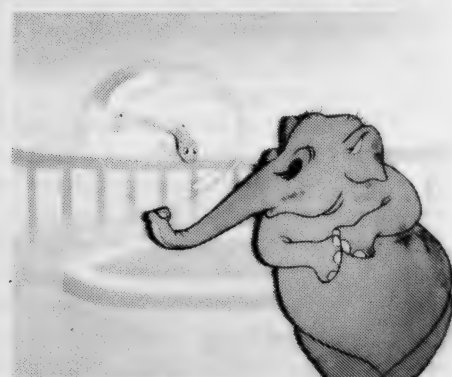
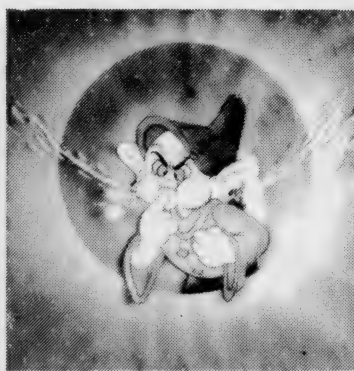
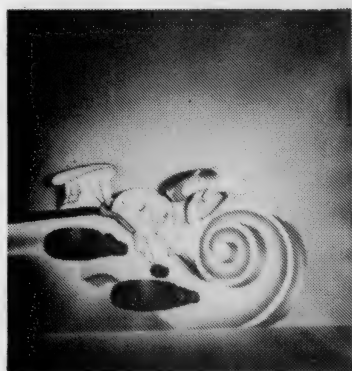
Animation archivist Jere Guldin last wrote about the Pre-Code cartoons of the early Thirties for ANIMATO!.

Waldorf's Toon Tavern

by mark hurley

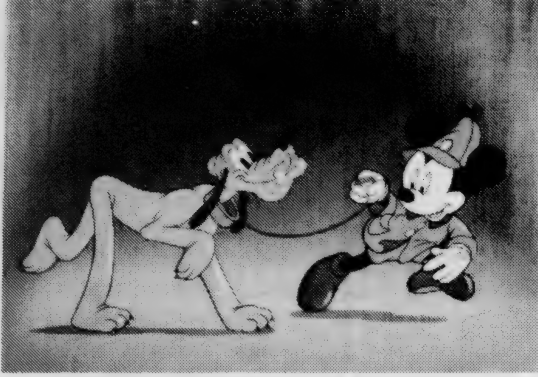


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Faces Behind The Voice:

Cheryl Chase

Meet Angelica of *Rugrats*

by Michelle Klein-Häss

One of the first things you notice about Cheryl Chase is that she really does bear a striking resemblance to the character Angelica from the Nicktoons series *Rugrats* which she gave voice to for 65 episodes and two years. If she did up her shoulder-length blonde hair in Angelica's trademark pigtails, the resemblance would be pretty scary. And like Angelica, she is very strong-willed, a quality that has kept her going in the nine years she has been working in Hollywood as a voice actress and casting coordinator.

Cheryl's role as the imperious, bratty but nevertheless endearing three year-old from hell earned her an Emmy, but it has been her work as a baby vocal effects expert which has gotten her some of her most visible roles and actual movie credits. In the film *Addams Family Values*, she gave voice to Pubert Addams, the mustachioed, indestructible baby, and she has also gurgled and cooed in such films as *Baby Boom* and *The Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult*.

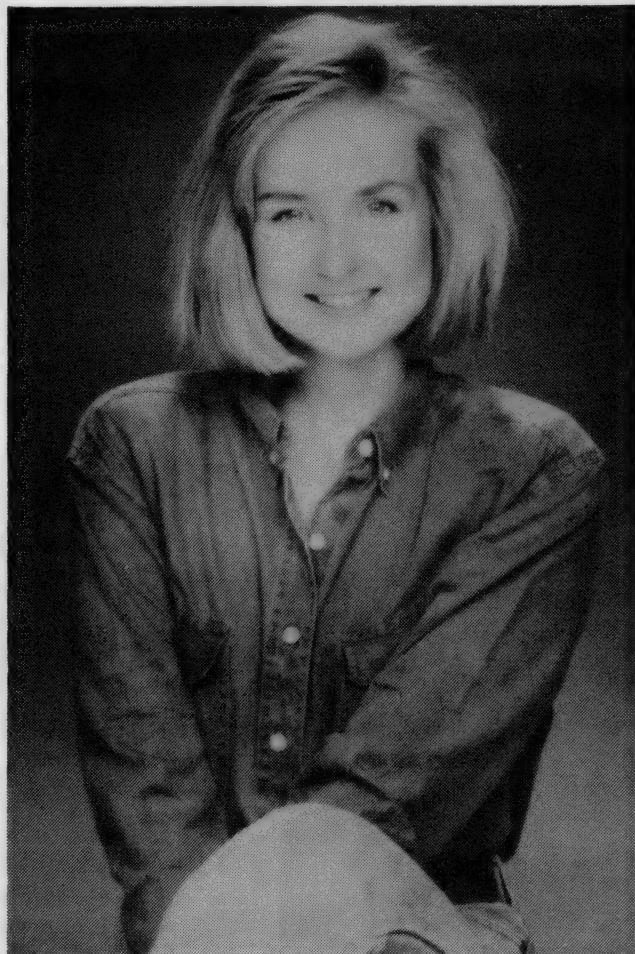
But ask her who her greatest influence is, and she will reach all the way back to the woman who inspired Betty Boop: Twenties-era vocalist Helen Kane. Cheryl is now in the process of putting together a one-woman show on the original "boop boop a doop" girl, and has been performing as a vocalist at local cabarets doing parts of the act.

Her big break in animation voice work came in 1989, when she was involved in a dubbing project for Streamline Pictures on some of their anime releases. Jerry Beck, who was at that point one of the executives at Streamline, introduced her to a friend of his, who had just gotten a contract with Nickelodeon to shoot a pilot, John Kricfalusi. The pilot was *Big House Blues*, which introduced Ren & Stimpy to animation fans throughout the country in the *Animation Celebration 1991* anthology. When she did the voice of the Little Girl, she was making her living doing temporary clerical jobs. By the time the series proper began shooting, she quickly became voice talent coordinator/casting director for Spumco.

"It was hard for me to get into the animation voice-over field out here...everyone hires the people they know, it's really insular....I did a few little piddly things for Hanna-Barbera and some Japanese company....Thank goodness for John....I owe so much to him. (Right after "Big House") I was working temp jobs...I had just been laid off from a temp assignment and was feeling a little down. I called up Jerry, and said 'let's go over to see John and watch the pilot...that'll cheer me up.' It was right at the time when it

just got finished. So I was watching it, and John leaned over to me and said, 'we're going into production, and I need people to help me. You want a job?' I accepted, and that's how I started physically working there. I started as a receptionist. Very soon after that, I became casting director...rounding up people to work on the show, talking to agents, supervising audition tapings...the whole thing."

As Spumco's casting director, she found herself seeing eye-to-eye with John K.'s theories about animation voices: that a naturally interesting, naturally funny voice can be as effective as the work of a pro...provided the person with a naturally funny voice has a talent for acting, and the ability to take direction.



"It's so much better when you can find someone with a naturally interesting voice...say a stand-up comic that you hear who has great timing and a naturally funny voice...that's how we got Harris Peet. It's best when the character is part of who you are...that it's coming out of part of you."

Cheryl gave voice to most of the adult female characters and some of the little girls on *R&S*. Her favorite *R&S* role, however, was "Wife," the reoccurring sitcom Mom character who is only shown from the waist down in the cartoons *The Boy Who Cried Rat*, *Rubber Nipple Salesmen*, and *Big Baby Scam*. The very latter cartoon, where she also did all the baby vocal effects, is perhaps her favorite piece of work on the show.



Cheryl Chase as Helen Kane

"John really fought for me to get that role...for whatever reason, Nickelodeon didn't think I could hack doing an adult woman's voice. It was good to finally play a role with breasts...at least I think she had them...kind of hard to tell when you don't see her upper torso." she said, laughing.

It was her work with Spumco which brought her to the attention of Klasky-Csupo Animation, which were developing another show for Nicktoons, *Rugrats*. She won the plum role of Angelica, the bane of Tommy Pickles and the other babies' existence.

"It was fun...I never was bossy as a kid, so Angelica wasn't taken from my own temperament as a child. But it was great to kind of bring that aspect of myself out and get paid for it too....I guess she was inside of me all along. I really didn't have to do much soul-searching to find her."

Since "Rugrats" wrapped production, she has spent a lot of time working on the Helen Kane project.

"I really admire her...she was great. I have been working on putting together a one-woman show based on her life...I've actually done parts of it for audiences and they all seem to love it. I'm looking forward to this gig really soon where I will be singing at this Betty Boop Festival in San Francisco, where they're going to show all the pre-code

Betty Boops. I tried out for this recent attempt to do a Betty Boop movie, [the project is now "in turnaround" and is awaiting new backing since a shakeup at MGM.] and got really far in the competition to do Betty's voice. It was when I was preparing to do the audition for Betty Boop that I began digging into the history of the character and I came across the story of Helen Kane. [According to animator Mark Kausler, Bernadette Peters was the final choice before the project was shelved.]

"I mean, I wound up getting into her real-life story...how she ended up in court fighting the Fleischers to get some kind of credit, some kind of compensation, because Mae Questel was really imitating her when she did Betty Boop. So

now what I'm doing is going to clubs with my accompanist, and doing all these songs Helen Kane made famous in the 1920s. I'm not sure if eventually I'll be portraying Kane in this show or just doing her music. I am even going to be doing this act for Uncle Sam...for the USO. I didn't even have to explain the act...they knew right off because I was in the get-up and everything. I'm going to be performing at bases all over California, and if they like me, maybe I'll get a chance to go overseas. That would be the thrill of my life...taking this overseas."

You see a look of childlike wonder come over Ms. Chase's face, and all of a sudden, you understand just why she's one of the most sought after people to do childrens' voices in cartoons...she might be an adult, but Cheryl Chase refuses to grow up.



Michelle Klein-Häss is a freelance writer based in the Los Angeles area.

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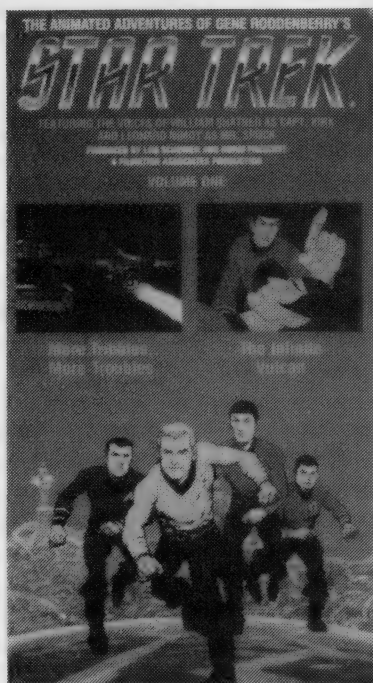
A Second Look

The animated *Star Trek* series gets little respect from either Trekkers or animation fans. Writer Kevin Lauderdale thinks it's time for a reassessment

by Kevin Lauderdale

The animated series of *Star Trek* was first televised over the 1973-1974 Saturday morning season on NBC. Since I was a small child at the time, I have only the most fleeting memories of this show which went on to win an Emmy Award. Most likely, the bulk of this magazine's readership finds itself in a similar state. There is little reason why one would be as familiar with the animated series as most of us (indeed, most of the world) are with the live-action series. After the initial broadcasts, the animated episodes were repeated through the 1974-75 season, and then vanished into virtual obscurity. Local television stations bought syndication rights and have, in the years since, aired episodes sporadically. However, these broadcasts usually serve as time fillers—to bridge half-hour gaps between weekend football games, for example. In any significant manner, the animated series has never been rebroadcast. But with the advent of laserdiscs and videotapes from Paramount Home Video, the 22 half-hour cartoons are now available for home viewing, appreciation, and re-evaluation.

What first grabs the eye is the animation itself. Even for Filmation Studios, the quality is poor. There are frequent long shots in which nothing moves at all and close-ups which show only one-third of the speaking character's face, but not the mouth (to avoid having to animate the mouth, or to avoid having to draw all of the face?). Likewise, the "whites" of each character's eyes are the same color as their flesh tones—Kirk's, pink; Spock's, tawny; Uhura's, brown. A typical example of the series' flawed animation appears in *The Magicks of Megas-Tu*, where the character of Lucien stands gesticulating. The upper portion of his body is one or two



shades off from that of his lower body, and the two halves are not quite aligned so that it is obvious that his bottom half remained one cel (or even part of the background) while only his top half was given the 24 cells per second (if that) required for animation.

But, like the original, live-action series, we forgive the cartoon equivalent of cheap props and having the actors run from one end of the set to the other to simulate the ship being hit. While the animation may not be on the same par with, say *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* (or even a *Charlie Brown* special), the show's other elements more than make up for it.

To begin with, this series is saved by its cast. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Nichelle Nichols, James Doohan, George Takei, and even Majel Barrett all lend their voices to the cartoon versions of their original characters as well as to most of the other characters. This is especially true of Barrett, who performed nearly all the female voices, and Doohan, a dialect specialist, who handled the bulk of the the additional male roles. The "real" voices, not someone else imitating them, helps make the cartoons ring true. If you close your eyes, the program still feels like *Star Trek*. Try that with the Saturday morning

versions of *Back to the Future* and *The Little Mermaid*.

The animated *Star Trek* retains its original characters, and also adds two more: A three-armed and three-legged ant-like replacement for Chekov named Lieutenant Arex and the catlike female, Lieutenant M'ress. Chekov does not appear in the animated series, nor is his absence explained, but this is forgivable since in the original series he seemed to come and go rather inexplicably. The two alien characters are just as intelligent and skilled as the rest of the crew. They are not tag-along pals. Nor are they, like Wesley Crusher in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, there for the children in the audience to "identify" with. One can easily imagine that Gene Roddenberry might have had characters like these in the original series had the makeup budget allowed it.

Next, there is the matter of the show's "adulthood." Were it produced today, the animated *Star Trek* would have undoubtedly fallen victim to today's trend of "juvenileization." Juvenileization is when a product which appeals to adults (and frequently to children) is made supposedly more appealing to children by the addition of young characters or a decrease in the age of characters. *Young Sherlock Holmes*, though not a cartoon, is a prime example of juvenileization. So is *Tiny Toon Adventures*, with its characters in high school (ACME "Looniversity" is a high school). In the original Warner Brothers cartoons, Bugs, Daffy and the rest were grown-ups making their way in a grown-up world. *The Real Ghostbusters* likewise introduced the "loveable" Slimer and his two young sidekicks. The most mysterious example of juvenileization was when the Muppets—the hallmark of preschool culture for two decades—were transcribed to Saturday morning cartoons and became the even more juvenile *Muppet Babies*. We can only presume that when the most popular film among children in years, *Jurassic Park*, comes to Saturday morning t.v., it will be in the form of *Camp Jurassic Park*, with children and teenagers frolicking amidst the

children and teenagers frolicking amidst the dinos, and getting involved in wacky situations. There is nothing wacky about the animated *Star Trek*. It is not *Tiny Trek*, “the adventures of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock when they were boys.” It has an adult “cast” and deals with the same sorts of adult themes and situations as the original series.

The animated series’ writing feels like its live-action predecessor because a number of the same people were responsible for both. D.C. Fontana served as story editor and Stephen Kandel, Margaret Armen, and Samuel A. Peeples were among those hired from the original *Star Trek* to write for the animated version. Additionally, D.C. Fontana and David Gerrold, along with writing new episodes, continued with two situations they created in the original series, Spock’s past and the tribbles, respectively. Even Walter Koenig wrote an episode. This helps to explain why the show does not talk down to children, nor is it “dumbed.” Such topics as the nature and demands of love (*Mudd’s Passion* and *The Survivor*), computer viruses (*The Practical Joker*), and cloning (*The Infinite Vulcan*) are discussed.

Indeed, at certain points, the linguistic level of the animated series surpasses that of its live action forbear. One of the best examples of this is in *The Slaver Weapon*, written by award-winning science fiction writer Larry Niven. Based on his short story “The Soft Weapon,” Niven links his Man-Kizin Wars universe of such books as *Ringworld* and *Neutron Star* to that of *Star Trek*. Spock, Sulu, and Uhura are captured by the Kizinti while trying to decipher the workings of an ancient weapon. The resident Kizinti telepath is characterized as “an unhappy neurotic.” When Sulu suggests that their captors are only pretending to be pirates and are actually working for the Kizinti government, the Kizinti captain replies, “If we are captured, the Highest of Kizin will repudiate us.” When was the last time one of the Teenagers Mutant Ninja Turtles used the word “repudiate?”

Likewise, in *The Ambergris Element*, the Enterprise crew explores Argo, a water world. Kirk and Spock are transformed into humanoid, water-breathers with gills, webbed fingers, and eyes “covered with a transparent film like the second eyelid of a fish.” A typical episode of the animated series is not only intelligent, but educational.

In *The Terratin Incident*, after being bombarded with mysterious waves, the crew begins to shrink. Or rather, they “contract.” It is explained that “That’s why our weight remains the same—same number of atoms. The effect is just reducing the space between the molecules.” When asked how long it could go on, Spock replies, “Ad infinitum, perhaps, considering distance between atoms is relatively as great as between stars.” “Ad infinitum.” You don’t hear Latin in cartoons anymore. Nor much physics. This conversation is immediately followed by a discussion about DNA. In *The Infinite Vulcan*, McCoy talks about “a modern Diogenes,” referring to the ancient Greek who wandered the night with a lantern looking for an honest man. And years before the Middle East was everyday news, there was an episode entitled *Jihad*, which we all know now to be the Arab word for “holy war.”

Along with rich language, this series also contends with complex themes. D.C. Fontana’s *Yesteryear*, an episode in which Spock returns to his past to save himself as a child, is quite profound and moving in its own way. In it, Spock’s childhood is shown, and his character fleshed out. It isn’t that Vulcans have no emotions, we are told, it is merely that they control them. Young Spock’s development of his sense of self is not the sort of material that any Saturday morning cartoon deals with today. Nor will you see lessons such as the fact that one must choose one’s own course in life so well integrated with adventure and excitement. And when Spock’s pet sehlat, I-Chaya, dies, one can’t help but be just as moved as in *Old Yeller*. This episode contends with serious themes and depicts serious events. This serious an episode would not appear on television today. There are no genuine animated dramas on television. There are either action (*Wild West C.O.W.-Boys of Moo Mesa*) or comedies (*Garfield and Friends*). *Batman: The Animated Series* is the only of today’s cartoons to even approach the level of the animated *Star Trek*. Like *Star Trek*, it too is filled with self-reflection, conflict which arises naturally from the characters, intelligent solutions, and the possibility of serious crises beyond the theft of a magic orb or how to keep the fact that Ariel has a pet whale from her father, King Triton.

The animated *Star Trek* also allowed characters to grow. Although Uhura (as well as most of the other females who appear) is stereotypically represented as having a perfect, hourglass figure, it is in the animated series that she really comes into her own. Twenty years before Beverly Crusher took command of the Enterprise in *Descent* on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, we got to see Uhura take command in *The Loreli Signal*. In this episode, all of the male bridge crew abandons their posts to respond to a siren’s signal a lá Ulysses, leaving Uhura in command. Not only does she command the ship, but she leads the rescue party that frees her male compatriots. And in *Once Upon a Planet*, it is she that first convinces the computer controlling the Shore Leave planet to look at life forms as something less than inferior pests.

An episode of the animated *Star Trek* is no mere shoot-em-up or saccharine message to be nice to the environment. When the Enterprise rids itself of an alien entity in *Beyond The Farthest Star*, the creature ends up trapped on a dead star. As the ship pulls away, we hear its mournful pleading “Don’t leave me, please. So lonely . . .” Its cries are mournful and eerie to hear. Can you imagine anything uncomfortable being represented in the kinder, gentler world of today’s cartoons? Even if this were an episode of *The Addams Family*, the entity would have undoubtedly been befriended, convinced to change its ways, and turned into a playmate for the kiddies. In *The Albatross*, Dr. McCoy is charged with genocide and the episode centers around the results of a plague. Nobody is ever put on trial for their life in an episode of *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

As Michael and Denise Okuda note in *The Star Trek Chronology* (Pocket Books, 1993), Roddenberry himself asked that this series not be considered part of the official *Star Trek* canon. This has resulted in the ghettoization of the animated series. No references are made to the events of the animated series in any of the films, nor in the new series of novels. It may not have been possible to pick up the threads left by the animated series in the films due to budget constrictions. There are no such restrictions in a novel. The fate of the fifty-foot-tall clone of Spock who remains on the planet

Continued on Page 69

Toon Collectibles:

Disney Limiteds Varied and Impressive

by Paul Krempa

In the last two issues I've discussed Warner Brothers and Hanna-Barbera limiteds. Some people have agreed, while others have disagreed with opinions that were stated. Mike and Pat wanted an **ANIMATO!** column to be an open discussion of animation collectibles. I've initially concentrated on limited editions because of their highly visible status. With that said, let me examine Disney's limiteds.

Disney has done an incredible job of reproducing images that elicit memories from their classic movies or theatrical shorts. Looking at the limiteds there is an incredible consistency of the characters' images. I never thought I would be able to compare these two studios, but Disney and Hanna-Barbera both do a remarkable job in their respective limiteds.

This can be attributed to the manner in which the cartoons were made. Warner's

cartoons are known by each director's style and interpretation of character. Disney and Hanna-Barbera follow strict model sheets to produce a uniformity of character throughout the studio. In the case of Disney, the character's image is taken from either film clips or the archives. Hence, when Disney produces a Mickey *Fantasia* limited, they don't look at the 1982 cels of the cartoon made for the Disney channel. They go back to the original, which is what people remember.

The appearance of the cels is quite impressive, as are the prices. Newly released Disney limiteds generally range from \$1000 to \$3000, and are usually in edition sizes of 500. With over one-hundred stores, four amusement parks (of course, we all know nothing sells at Euro Disney) and authorized galleries, they should be selling out of these limiteds. But they aren't. There are probably two factors that cause this. The first is the

price. While Warner's has done a good job of anticipating an equilibrium point between supply and demand, Disney has tended to overprice their cels. Most Disney cels are larger than the standard 10.5" X 12.5", which will tend to increase the cost but, even given this rationale, some prices are simply ridiculous.

For example, the cel *Sunset Romance* with Aladdin and Jasmine is 16" x 12", edition size of 500, and retails for almost \$2800! Yes, it's a gorgeous piece, from an incredibly popular movie, but in comparison to other pieces, it's quite expensive. Consider that you could buy a production cel of *Lady from Lady and The Tramp*, four Warner Brothers limiteds, or my brother's car for about the same amount. Yes, Disney does incredible work! Yes, Disney is the most famous animation studio in the world! Finally, unequivocally, yes, Disney's prices are too high!

The second factor is that Disney stores sell hand-painted limiteds in close proximity to the sericels. Sericels are an altogether different art entity. When a customer walks in and sees price tags of \$250 for most Disney sericels, and then \$2800 for an Aladdin limited, they will most likely be more interested in the seri unless they genuinely understand and appreciate the difference.

For those who aren't familiar, here is a brief description of sericels taken from the Disney Animation Art brochure: "To produce a sericel, Disney artists create a hand-inked, hand-colored painting or model of



An example of a Disney limited edition cel which faithfully re-creates a scene from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. (© The Walt Disney Company)

Continued on Pg 70

An Animato! Review

The Lion King

by G. Michael Dobbs

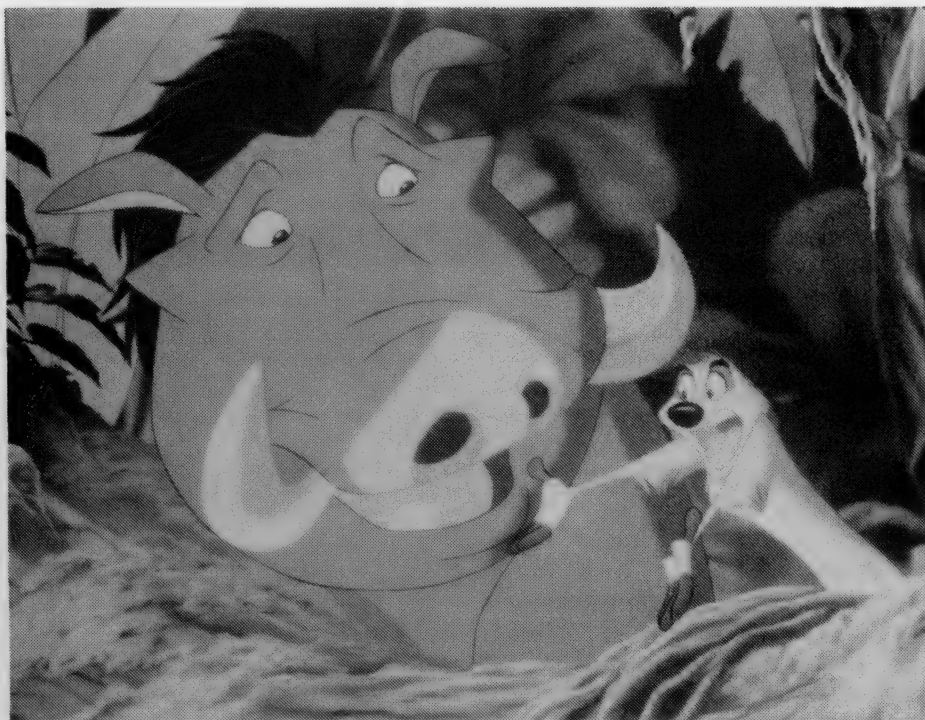
With *The Lion King*, the Disney animation studios are treading on, for them, new ground. Rather than follow their established format of romance/adventure/comedy musicals, they've opted for a musical/comedy drama. The results are, at best, uneven.

Drama of the kind in *The Lion King* has seldom been seen in Disney's animated productions. Sure, you've got dramatic moments in nearly all of their films, but no one would actually describe any of their cartoons features as a drama, with the possible exception of *Bambi*.

The core of *The Lion King*'s plot is indeed pretty serious; a return of a prodigal son and the acknowledgment of his responsibility. The Disney publicity emphasizes the plot of the new movie is the first *original* screenplay the studio has produced, but that is an iffy claim at best. Critics have pointed out the debt the cartoon owes to *Hamlet*, and there are some broad similarities. An equally important influence, though, is the classic Japanese television series *Kimba, The White Lion*, which told stories of a young male cub learning lessons he would need when he became king. And, needless to say, there are certainly influences from other Disney films (the power-hungry villain with the funny henchmen, and the funny bickering sidekicks of the hero).

Believe it or not, my recent interview with Ralph Bakshi colored my viewing of *The Lion King*. Bakshi remarked that Disney's early features were great because Disney and his staff really believed in films such as *Snow White*, *Dumbo*, and *Fantasia*. I really didn't get the sense of any great passion behind this film.

Are there good moments? Definitely. Simba's sidekicks, Pumbaa the wart hog and Timon the meerkat are wonderful characters, and the film comes alive when they're on the screen. Fart jokes in a Disney film? Well, obviously the *Ren and Stimpy* influence is even felt in the hallowed halls of Walt's domain. Another supporting character is also a gem; Rafiki the mystic baboon. The



The scene-stealers of *The Lion King*, Pumbaa and Timon.

©The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved.

computer-generated wildebeest stampede is also very impressive.

The film suffers from several key writing problems. It's easier to switch from slapstick comedy to fairy tale adventure than it is to switch from slapstick comedy to high drama, and the transitions seem to be fairly awkward.

Because this is a drama, there has to be a conflict, and in *The Lion King* one of the conflicts is between Simba and Scar. While a villain can be sardonic, he can't be a buffoon. Classical villains are motivated to be villains by their weaknesses, and it is their envy of what they don't have makes them dangerous. If they appear inept, though, the audience won't take them seriously as a threat. Too frequently the humor makes Scar a boob. Scar's henchmen, the three hyenas, should have carried the humor load completely.

The other conflict is of course the inner struggle in Simba himself which is much more difficult to portray. Animated characters in a romance/comedy/drama are generally not the best vehicles for serious introspection. When Simba looks to the night sky and sees his father in the clouds solemnly intoning about knowing who he is, my wife leaned over and mentioned how reminiscent the scene was of something from the *Star*

Wars trilogy (especially with James Earl Jones performing as the father).

There are loose ends in the story as well. Why don't the female lions oppose what Scar is doing? After all, since they are the hunters who are leaving the area, why don't they take off? How long is Simba away? Months? Years? Just why does the lions' "kingdom" wither up and die under Scar? What does Simba do to restore it?

The animation is up to the high Disney feature standards, as is the voice work by an all-star cast. The music, though, is just plain awful. Elton John doesn't seem to understand the nature of the musical form, and the Disney Studios would be better served by using composers rather than aging rock stars. While the studio has been trumpeting how "African" this film is, they would have been better served if they actually had used some African composers and performers to create the score.

Since the next few Disney animated releases are also musical dramas (including a musical *Hunchback of Notre Dame*! I wonder what cute little hunchback toys they'll come up with?), I can only hope they can come up with an approach that marries these elements together in a better fashion than *The Lion King*.



Independent Eyes: Fred Stuhr

His stop-motion work in a number of rock videos is getting this model animator some well-deserved attention.

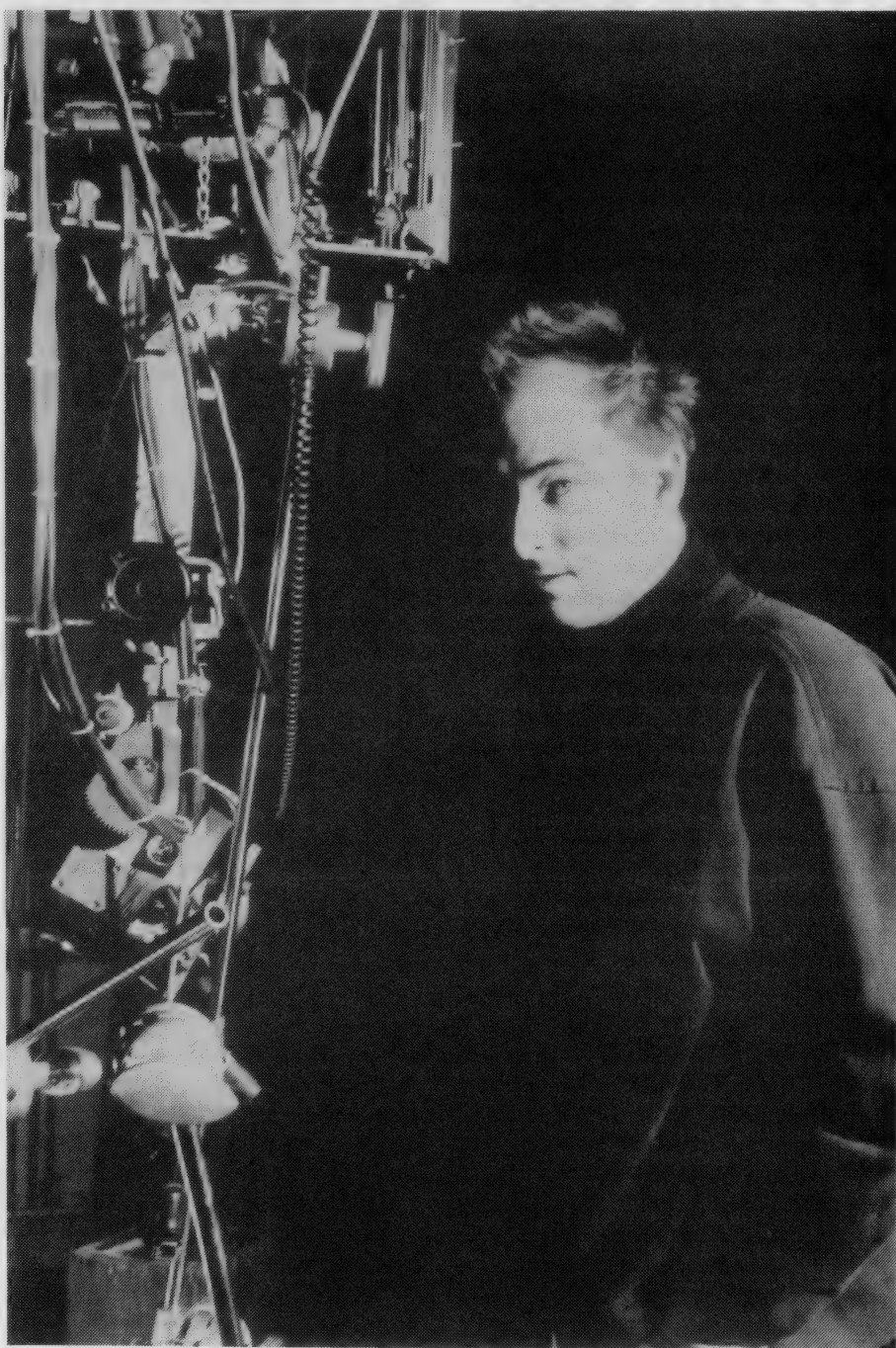
by Michelle Klein-Häss

The first thing you think about when you enter the space where Fred Stuhr did half of his work on the rock band Tool's new video *Prison Sex* is that you have suddenly walked into a scene in a David Lynch movie. There are dolls and pieces of dolls on workbenches all over the rooms, save for the one set up for the actual filming. A medium-sized mutt (a dead ringer for Brownie/Lazarus, the dog who was in the news in March for being prematurely buried) runs in delighted circles in front of you. Her circular motion is dictated by the fact she has only one eye and is in constant rotation to keep her remaining eye trained on you.

Stuhr was born and raised in Pasadena, California, and he has chosen to maintain that picturesque Los Angeles suburb as his base of operations. But the first time I spoke with him, he was working in a space that Tool's guitarist Adam Jones had rented for the purpose near the band's studio.

As I conducted that interview, neither one of us had any idea that within a few days after we spoke, the space would be damaged beyond repair by the Northridge/Reseda Quake of 1994.

"We were actually filming *Prison Sex* when the quake hit...about 5 of us working on the video. The quake struck, and we all bolted out of there. The studio was sketchy to begin with...this old brick building in Hollywood. If it wasn't for the fact that it was so scary, it would have been beautiful...I saw all these transformers blowing up all along Hollywood Boulevard, sparks shooting out everywhere....We only went back into the building to grab the materials for the



Model animator Fred Stuhr (© Michelle Klein-Häss)

video and move them back to my studio in Pasadena. I was working on another video, the Hendrix video, in my own studio, so I had to take a whole day to move the stuff for that out of the way and set up to finish the

Tool video."

And yet, despite that setback, the video was completed and began airing in late February on MTV and The Box. It's a beautiful but terrifying piece of work, which

consists primarily of a small, broken doll being menaced by a larger creature which looks like a cross between a woman in a tight black-leather bondage suit and one of those big-eyed aliens that UFO abductees invariably describe as passengers of those ships.

"The song's about child molestation...confronting the horror and pain of going through such treatment. But the visuals are open to interpretation, which is something I prefer. You can read into them whatever you want."

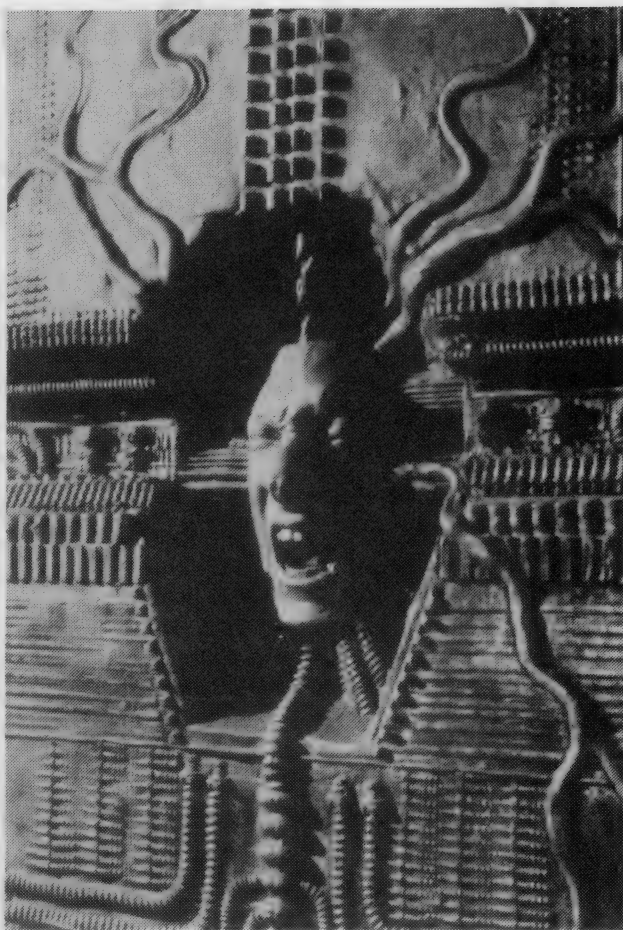
Stuhr began his career as an animator when he went to school at Art Center School Of Design in Pasadena, but the roots of his dedication to his chosen art form run much deeper.

"Ray Harryhausen really blew me away...*Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, *Clash of the Titans*...those were all really inspiring. I did a lot of drawing as a kid. After learning to draw well, and a few home experiments with film and video, I knew I wanted to combine both arts, and become an animator. I don't like to noodle endlessly over a drawing, I don't have the patience for it...but I love working with my hands. Puppet animation, claymation...that was what excited me then, and it still does now."

At Art Center, Stuhr made two student films, one which caught the eye of the rock band Green Jello. Stuhr, still living at home with his parents, shot their video *Three Little Pigs* at his parents' house with only the help of his friend and schoolmate Al Evans, who still works with him today.

"['Three Little Pigs'] is a silly song, so I did silly visuals for that....I did practically everything on that. I sculpted everything, and [Evans] was there to primarily help me build sets and stuff."

Ironically, it was that "silly" video that caught the attention of Adam Jones of the rock band Tool. Jones and Stuhr met, and an instant rapport developed. By the time Stuhr was hired to make the band's first video, *Sober*, they had become friends and collaborators.



This self-portrait of Stuhr was originally to be used on the cover for Tool's *Opiate* EP. It has become a signature piece "The Screaming Wall." (Art © 1992 Fred Stuhr Animation. Photo © 1994 Michelle Klein-Häss)

"I became friends with Adam, and he was really hot to make a video. It amazed me how much we had in common, how many things we were both into. He had worked at Stan Winston Studios, which is a Hollywood makeup firm, and was in his own right a great artist, great sculptor, I had sketchbooks, Adam had sketchbooks, and we'd sit around discussing stuff for hours. We narrowed it down to three or four characters, and those made it into the video."

Like *Prison Sex*, *Sober* is a dark, hallucinogenic video. An old, decrepit man in a decaying building finds a box, slices it open with a knife, and suddenly begins seeing horrifying visions. He hides the box, but like the legendary box given to Pandora, the visions released do not go away but get more and more horrifying. It is hard to describe the

action in the video because the images, like those in *Prison Sex* are so open to interpretation. But the innovative techniques involved are not only fascinating, but easier to describe in print. For example, a striking scene when the old man, levitating in a slat-back chair, suddenly falls over and his face melts into a puddle.

"It's really simple how the chair levitates...you never see all the chair, and the spot the camera movements miss is where I put the post to hold the chair up. The melting face was done in real time...that was Adam's idea. What we did was use the same mold we cast the old man's head in, and instead of the plastic we used gelatin...a really squishy kind of gelatin. Adam then painted the face with makeup to make it look like the old man doll's head, then when the cameras rolled, we hit the thing with a heat gun to melt it."

Sober wound up breaking things wide open for Stuhr. Not only did it allow him to make the second video, *Prison Sex* for Tool, but he has gotten other offers. The opening sequence for the short-lived Chevy Chase talk show was one project he did in the wake of *Sober*, and he is just now in the

process of completing a video with veteran video director Wayne Isham for Jimi Hendrix' song, "Are You Experienced?"

"Yeah, MCA Records re-mastered and re-issued the Hendrix albums last year, and so they called on Wayne Isham to put a new video together for it. Isham liked my work, and particularly liked this one bit which was on my demo reel. It was this piece I did with this zombie-like figure trudging through a red desert...sort of like the landscapes the Viking probe took on Mars. The figure had a head that looked like a bird's skull, yet at the same time looked really Egyptian...sort of like the god Horus who's got a hawk's head. I did the piece just after *Sober*...it was a personal piece.

"They really liked the character, and

Continued on Page 70

The Return of Creator-Driven Cartoons

Ever wonder why most cartoons get so little attention in the mainstream media? I've got a two-part theory; first, many people working even on the entertainment beat know so little about animation (kid's stuff, you know), they're not compelled to cover it.

The second is that most cartoons on television are simply not funny.

Really, I think it's as simple as that. Persuade someone from the press to sit down and watch a couple of Saturday mornings of animation, and you're not going to impress them. Too much of what's on the air is highly derivative thinly-disguised toy commercials. The irony is today the interest in animation is large and growing, but the bulk of what's being produced is still dreck.

There are exceptions, of course, and most of them follow a basic pattern. They are creator-driven.

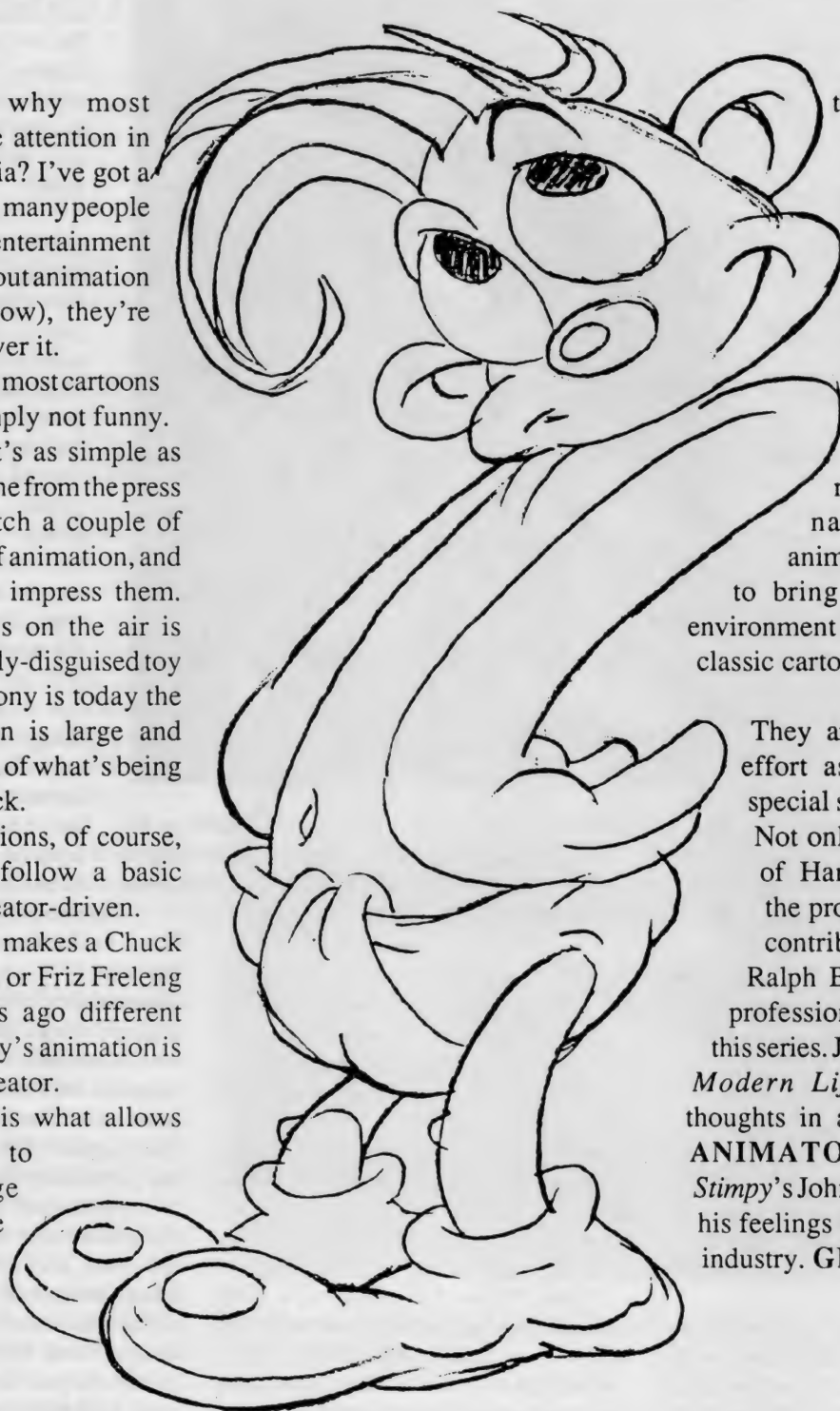
The spark which makes a Chuck Jones, or Tex Avery, or Friz Freleng short from 50 years ago different from the bulk of today's animation is the influence of a creator.

This difference is what allows the older cartoons to maintain their huge popularity. People will be watching the classics well-into

the next century. They won't be watching *The Teenage Muntant Ninja Turtles*, for example.

With the announcement of the Hanna-Barbera Shorts Program for the Cartoon Network, one of the most prominent names in television animation is taking a stand to bring back the working environment in which many of the classic cartoons were produced.

They are not alone in this effort as you'll see in this special section of interviews. Not only does the president of Hanna-Barbera discuss the program, but one of the contributors to the series, Ralph Bakshi, discusses his professional re-birth through this series. Joe Murray of *Rocko's Modern Life* contributes his thoughts in an essay written for **ANIMATO!**, and *Ren and Stimpy's* John Kricfalusi discusses his feelings about the state of the industry. GMD



One of Ralph Bakshi's new characters. ©1994 Bakshi Zootoons

Returning to Cartoons

Hanna-Barbera's president is aggressively developing new talent the old fashioned way

by G. Michael Dobbs

Fred Seibert wants people to understand there is a difference between "animation" and "cartoons," and that Hanna-Barbera is back in to the "cartoon" business.

The president of Hanna-Barbera sees a cartoon as a one-reel animated film made by a cohesive team led by an animation director, and designed to make audiences laugh. While all "cartoons" are animation, not all "animation" is "cartoons."

"What had happened when Hanna-Barbera started television animation was they had people with 30 years experience making great cartoons," explained Seibert. "In their sleep, they could make funny cartoons. As those people left the industry, there was no way to replace them."

Without the vehicle of the one-reel cartoon, "the way of developing creative talent dried up," said Seibert, who has taken a very active step in reversing the trend.

Unlike many television productions of the past 30 years, theatrical cartoons were made by units headed by a director. At Warner Brothers, there were units led by directors such as Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett, and Friz Freleng. At MGM, Joe Hanna and Bill Barbera had a unit as did Tex Avery. The director and his unit were responsible for producing a set number of cartoons a year. They developed their own stories and characters.

In March, Hanna-Barbera announced the company's Shorts Program with the goal of producing 48 six to seven minute short subjects to air on the Cartoon Network beginning late this year and early 1995. Rather than employ the type of production techniques that have become standard in



Fred Seibert (courtesy Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, Inc.)

television animation today, the Hanna-Barbera Shorts Program is looking towards the past.

"Betty Cohen [president of the Cartoon Network] and I were talking, and we thought that the 'Golden Age of Animation' had less to do with theatrical releasing and full animation, and more with the fact that they were made one at a time," said Seibert.

Thirty years ago, advertising and network executives defined how television animation would be produced. With low budgets and fast schedules, television animation had to be made by committee with a realization that making animated drawings cost more money than recording a voice track. The result of these market demands was animation that was script-driven as opposed to image-driven.

With their Shorts Program, Hanna-Barbera wants to change all that, and has reinstated the unit form of production. "In the 'Golden Age,' writers filled the gaps between the pictures, while today's 'animation' fills

the gaps between the words," Seibert said.

The new shorts will be returning animation back to a medium of images from being what's been called "illustrated radio." To get the strong visual and personal cartoons he wants Seibert has invited a number of animators to head up their own unit, and direct their own short. Among the cartoons that have begun production are:

Look Out Below - Pat Ventura is re-interpreting two of Tex Avery's characters George and Junior in a new cartoon.

Hard Luck Duck - William Hanna's first solo effort since 1941 introduced a new character, Hard Luck Duck.

Johnny Bravo - Recent Loyola Marymount graduate Van Partible is using one of his student films as the basis of this short telling the story of a hip-swaying Fifties-esque rock and roll idol.

Stay Out - Joe Barbera directs his own short starring Dino from *The Flintstones*

Continued on Page 68

Ralph Bakshi: Back to Basics and Loving It

The original bad boy of animation is beginning work on five shorts for the Hanna Barbera Shorts Program, and is thrilled.

By G. Michael Dobbs

Ralph Bakshi is a happy man.

The original enfant terrible of animation; the man who pushed animation into an X rating with *Fritz the Cat*; the man who managed to make perhaps the most personal and politically charged animated features to this date is once again doing short subjects, and he is loving it.

This isn't a comedown for the man who shouldered the blame for the multi-million *Cool World* debacle. "I'm the happiest I've been in 25 years," he said proudly.

"They (Hanna-Barbera) asked me to do shorts, and the budgets are not enormous (they're about \$200,000 a short) and what's spectacular for me about it is I'm allowed to create my own characters, do my own drawings, and get back to where I started in the business because I'm pretty disgusted where I am today. In other words, it allows me to go all the way back home and reminds me how I got to *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*. For me, it's been a personal renaissance," said Bakshi.

Bakshi's deal with Hanna-Barbera is to produce five shorts within the next two years, with an option to produce five more. He feels so strongly about participating in the Shorts Program that he recently turned down directing an animated children's movie.

There's no executive parking space for Bakshi at his new studio. The man who was running his own studio in California with hundreds of employees is now very happy to be in a casual, almost make-shift two-room studio in Manhattan with a very small staff. When **ANIMATO!** publisher Patrick Duquette and I visited him, his assistant was covering the phone and taking care of logistics, while another staffer was working



© Bakshi Zootoons

with an Amiga computer set-up which delivers instant pencil tests. The sounds of New York from open windows attempted to compete with Bakshi's confident voice colored with a hearty Brooklyn accent.

Around Bakshi's work area literally dozens of drawings of characters and gags are pinned up on the wall. Some are in color, some are finished drawings, while others are rough sketches. There's another over-flowing pile of drawings near his desk. For anyone who ever imagined what Bakshi's studio would be like based on viewing his early features...well, this is it.

Rather than just produce cartoons, such as the late and lamented Mighty Mouse series, or fight the kind of studio politics he faced with *Cool World*, Bakshi is back to basics...writing, directing and producing his own material. He's also going to animate, something of which he admits to having done too little in the past few years.

With his early features, Bakshi did as many drawings as he could to turn over to animators, but as his career went from *Fritz the Cat*, and *Heavy Traffic* to films such as *Lord of the Rings* and *American Pop*, his role changed.

"As the studio grew, more people started to do work. I became a producer more than a director, and I had all these other responsibilities, and my whole tone changed.

In other words, the kind of stuff I wanted to do, the kind of stuff I was trying to do suddenly shifted," said Bakshi. "And I had no idea it had shifted. I was very proud of the studio. I was very proud of having 400 people work for me. I was a big-time Hollywood director. I was very proud of what they were paying me. I don't know if it was ego, but basically what happened to me was I became another man without really realizing it. And I wasn't happy with my work. I wasn't happy at all. And I didn't know why I wasn't happy."

Getting back to basics means that Bakshi has two other animators besides himself and just three assistants. With the exception of inking and painting, all of the production work will be done in New York.

"From here, I want to build back, and create a small feature film unit that will do the kind of animation that I gave up after *Coonskin* was thrown out of the theaters," said Bakshi.

Only since beginning work on these new shorts has Bakshi realized something about himself. With the encouragement of his wife, the help of a therapist and considerable soul-searching, he said he now sees how lucky he was to create three features (*Fritz the Cat*, *Heavy Traffic*, and *Coonskin*, known on video as *Streetfight*) which were highly personal artistic and political

expressions.

"My wife said they let me get away with murder," he said.

"Hollywood forced me to change and said if you want to continue to do animation you have to clean up your act. [Go from R-rated material to PG] and make sure there are no ideas in the PG. I was very political," said Bakshi.

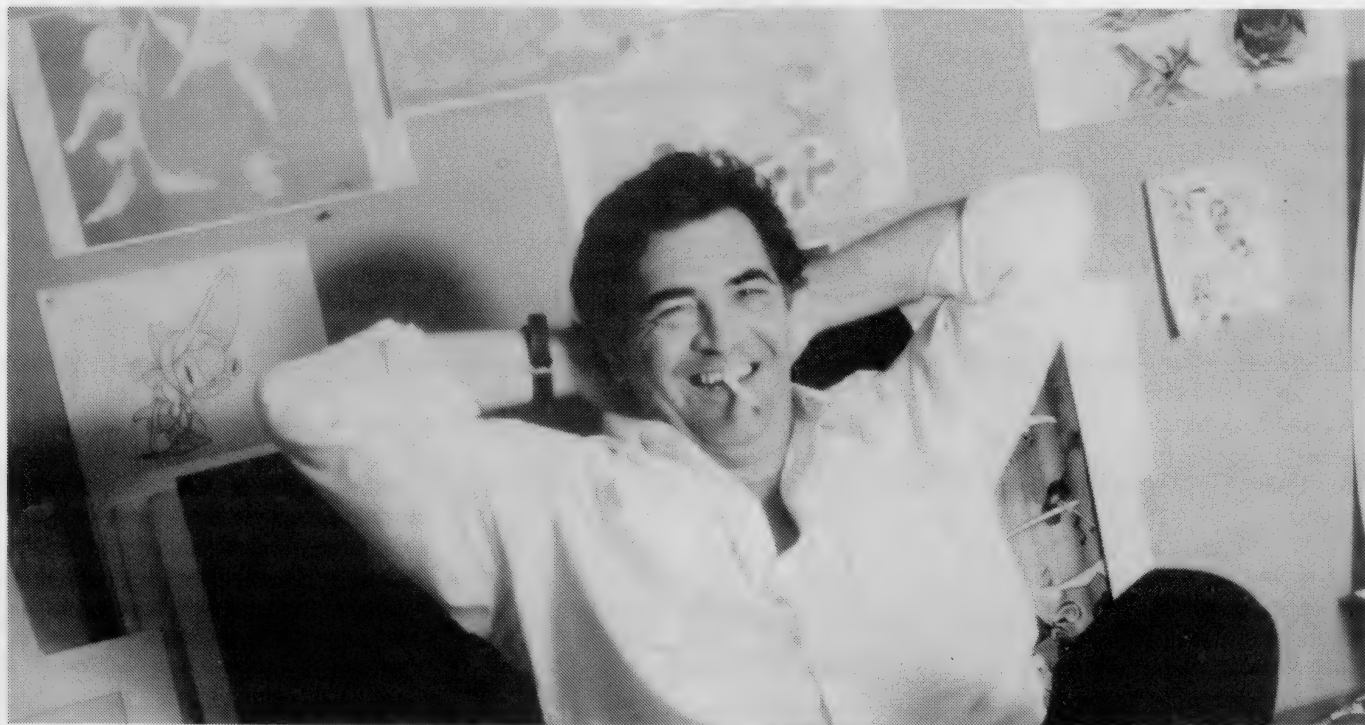
Ask him about his films, and Bakshi is quick to respond with frank and surprising answers.

"I love *Wizards*, but I don't love *Lord of the Rings*. I appreciate *American Pop*, but I don't love it. And I appreciate *Fire and Ice*, but I don't love it."

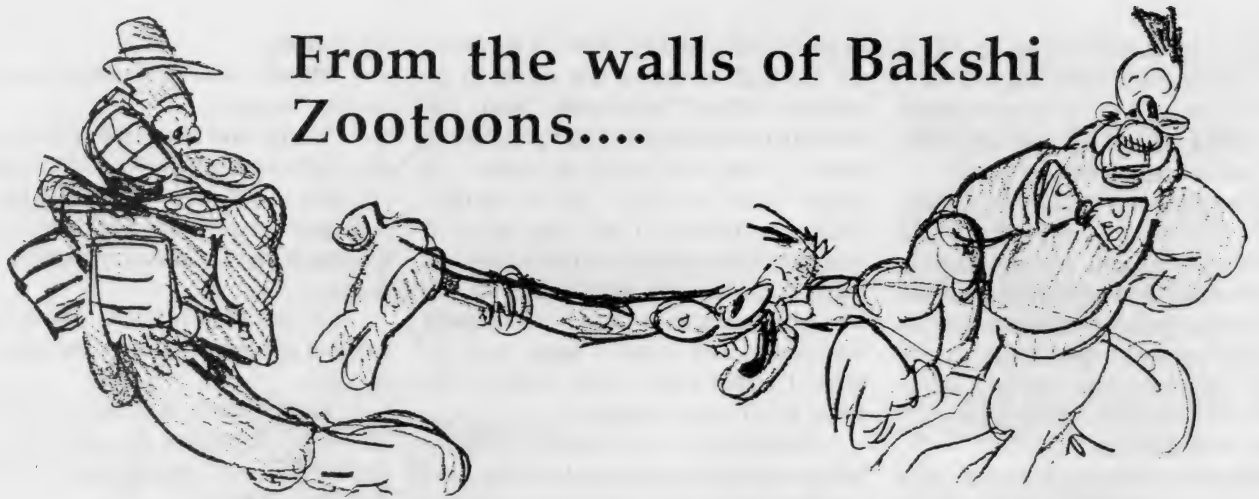
Bakshi prides himself on being a cartoonist, and for him the title has a very particular meaning.

"A cartoonist is an observer of life, and he puts down what he observes. And that was very important to me....Goya taught me that, Daumier taught me that, Rolandson taught me that; the artists I love, the guys I used to look at as a kid taught me that. I didn't think there was any way else to cartoon. That's cartooning. The rest is illustration. What Disney does is illustration, not cartooning. They illustrate the script very well, but they don't cartoon. Mutt and Jeff is

Continued on Page 36



From the walls of Bakshi Zootoons....



Ralph Bakshi is constantly drawing, and through his sketching he gets the ideas for characters and stories for his new cartoon shorts.

Hanging up on the walls of his New York studio and stacked in piles near his drawing board are dozens of drawings. Here's some of his new creations which may turn up on the Cartoon Network in the next year.



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Writers Need Not Apply:

An Interview with John Kricfalusi

The creator of *Ren and Stimpy* is passionate about returning animation to the control of animators

By G. Michael Dobbs

"Personally, I don't know why anyone would buy any of these cels," said John Kricfalusi with a loud laugh. "If they want them, we'll make them."

Perhaps only an artist such as Kricfalusi would go against conventional wisdom quite so blatantly by questioning his own limited edition cel program minutes before a signing at a major gallery. In a way though, one might expect such an iconoclastic attitude from the creator of *Ren and Stimpy* who is now busy trying to launch a new series of cartoons.

While the American Royal Arts Gallery on Newbury Street in Boston filled up with eager Spumco fans, Kricfalusi took time to meet with myself and ANIMATO! publisher Patrick Duquette to talk about his new projects and animation in general.

Talking with Kricfalusi is not unlike speaking to a religious fundamentalist. Animation for him is a very pure faith, and Kricfalusi sees a lot of barbarians running amok today in the temple. Show biz corporate types and sit-com writers are among the worst infidels in Kricfalusi's book.

Foremost in the minds of his fans, however, is the status of a new Spumco cartoon. Kricfalusi reported reluctantly that the *He Hog The Atomic Pig* deal with USA Cable has fallen through. According to the recent issue of *Tease*, Kricfalusi is trying to interest the Fox Network in a George Liquor program.

A Spumco comic book from Marvel Comics, called *Comic Book*, is scheduled to begin appearing in the fall. Kricfalusi's heart, though, is in animation, and despite these frustrating set-backs, he is very determined to get back into production.

"We're producing some Jimmy The Idiot [or Hapless] Boy shorts right now on our own, but that's kind of a long process. If we're going to complete them ourselves it

will take longer than if we actually sell them to a distributor or a movie theater chain or a movie studio, which we're looking to do right now. We'd rather have a big distributor do that, but in the meanwhile we're not going to let that stop us," said Kricfalusi.

Kricfalusi has been attempting to develop strategies to revive the theatrical short, and spoke of either piggybacking the shorts with feature films (a la the Roger Rabbit cartoons) or of finding some other means of distribution. He acknowledged the difficulty of the talks, but believes theatrical distribution is vital.

"I really believe the future of cartoons needs to be grounded on shorts like the past," said Kricfalusi. "There would have been no *Snow White*, no *Pinocchio*, no *Peter Pan*, no anything today if it wasn't for short cartoons. They built the industry. They built

the animators...shorts are the greatest medium for practicing so then you can go on to features. I think the reason most animated features bomb is that there is no chance to practice, there's no chance to try out the artform before they go out and compete against live-action movies."

Kricfalusi has no shortage of ideas, either for these or other animation projects. Besides He Hog and Jimmy, there's a superhero send-up entitled *The Ripping Friends* and, of course, the character that made Nickelodeon very nervous, George Liquor. An educated guess would be that Kricfalusi has a soft spot for the hyper "manly" George, as he, much to our amusement, performed George for us with vein-popping intensity.

Kricfalusi is also intense about restoring



Continued on Page 36

Creator-Driven Animation: Not for the Squeamish

The producer of *Rocko's Modern Life* has some strong opinions about creator-driven animation.

by Joe Murray

There's a reason why classic creator-driven animation faded away. It was a victim of its own environment. And there is a reason why it's suddenly gasping for air, asking for a second chance.

As the creator and producer of *Rocko's Modern Life*, an animated series that airs on Nickelodeon in the USA and the UK, I have seen both the benefits and the pitfalls. *Rocko* is creator-driven animation, which means that the final product, in its storytelling, design, and approach to character personalities, has a singular vision - the creator's.

In the forties, directors like Tex Avery and Chuck Jones made cartoons to precede feature films. Each of these beautifully animated cartoons represents the personality of its director, and is as fresh today as it was fifty years ago. When cartoons began to enter television, budget constraints replaced full animation with cheaper and quicker limited animation. Early attempts at this process, such as Hanna-Barbera's *Flintstones* and Jay Ward's *Bullwinkle* cartoons, could support the limited animation through strong writing. But soon the writing became homogenized. Small groups of passionate animators were replaced by faceless factories, which often were turning out cartoons to support toy lines. Cartoons became committee-driven, and they all looked the same.

"Creator-driven" means looking at animation as art. At *Rocko's Modern Life*, we struggle to keep the classic creator-driven process alive. Beginning with my overall vision, directors are handed outlines of stories that I have either written myself or approved. From these outlines, directors have the freedom to tweak the story and tell it in their

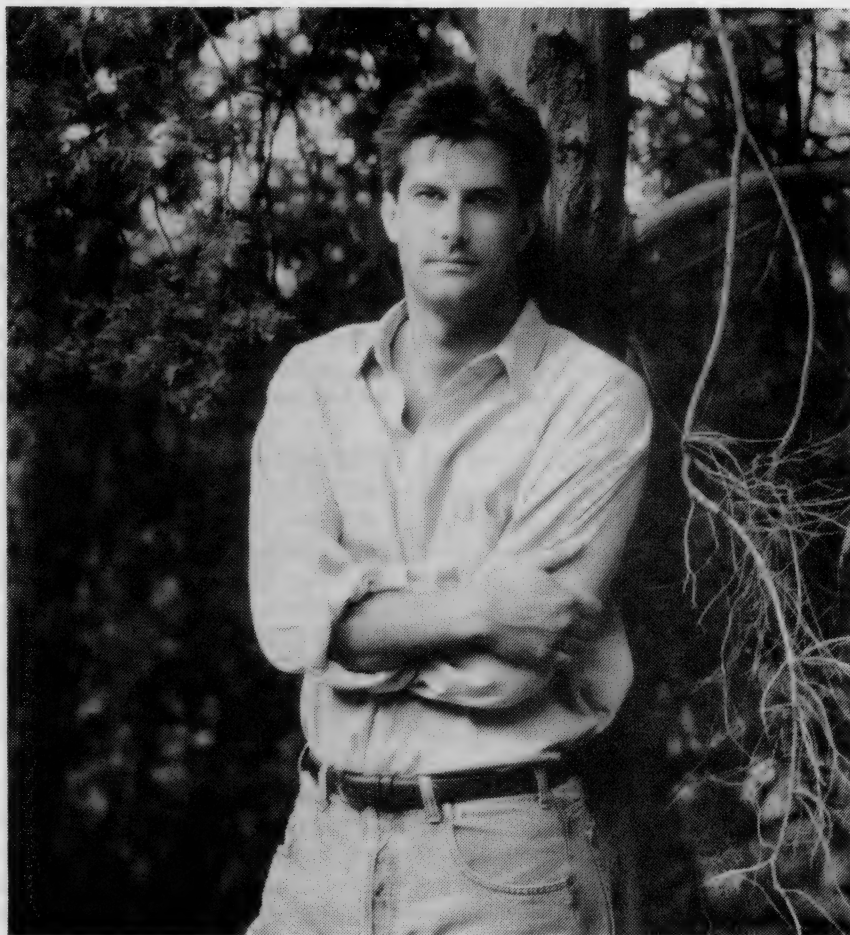
own visual way - as long as they stay true to the *Rocko* concept. It's as if they have creator-driven projects of their own. The rest of the studio follows their lead, developing pride of ownership by offering new ideas to improve scenes or gags. This process encourages passion, which translates into a level of artistry and integrity that is lacking in shows produced by animation factories.

Combining this method with the realities of business, however, can be like mixing oil and water. Budgets and airdates often have the studio working on 26 episodes simultaneously. Struggling to keep on top of every detail can be like putting a leash on Godzilla and attempting to take him for a walk. This encourages us to look at production as part of the art process. A painter can complain about the quality of his canvas or find methods of adapting his art to his environment.

Who has brought creator-driven animation back to life? We animators have always been willing to invest ourselves in our work. The networks and film studios,

who take risks to bring singular visions to life, deserve credit, too. Making creator-driven animation demands big leaps of faith: trusting the creator and letting him run with his ideas (even if they're hard to visualize). It's not easy for a network or studio to take this approach, but a creator given trust and freedom will invest much more of himself in the project, and it will be apparent in the quality of the work.

From a business perspective, creator-driven animation shatters the myth that a show must choose between artistic integrity and commercial viability. These shows will always produce a good return on investment, because of their great longevity and the increased ratings they garner (audiences gravitate to them, because they're so markedly different from the other shows on TV). It takes guts and vision to see past the difficulties to the benefits. Creator-driven animation isn't for everyone, but I wouldn't - and couldn't - do it any other way. 



BAKSHI

From Page 31

cartooning; Herriman is cartooning. The essence of cartooning is underground. It's graffiti on the wall. It's a jab in a face. It's not agreeing with. And that's what I was doing without intellectualizing it."

For a man who was blamed for the failure of the high-profile animated release *Cool World*, Bakshi is extremely forthcoming and candid in discussing the production. Settling back into his chair and puffing on what seems to be a never-ending series of cigarettes, Bakshi opened the discussion with the revelation that *Cool World* started out as an almost completely different story.

"I wanted to do a horror film. I went to work [writing the script] and Paramount bought it. The original concept was that a live-action character gets into the cartoon world, (it makes sense how he got there) and goes to bed with this girl who wanted to be real. And they had a baby and the baby was a monster. And the baby happened in 30 seconds. The whole thing was about the father and son relationship. It really was a strange story. I think it was a potentially good film."

Bakshi admits he was enthusiastic at the time to be working with a \$30 million budget, (up until then *Lord of the Rings* at \$4 million was his most expensive production), but that elation wore off when on the first day of shooting the live action, a second script arrived.

"I should have quit. That's where I made my mistake," said Bakshi. "I should have walked off the set, but they were paying me a fortune, and I rationalized it and said 'who cares?'"

Paramount convinced Bakshi that their script was better, and despite numerous misgivings over serious plot holes, Bakshi stayed on.

Bakshi worked on the film for the better part of two years when studio politics deposed Frank Mancuso, Sr. as head of production and installed former NBC television honcho Brandon Tartikoff. Tartikoff told Bakshi he no longer wanted *Cool World* to be an "R" rated film, but rather a "PG-13." Bakshi was

just days away from finishing the production.

Adding to his woes was Paramount's decision to hire a company to run previews showing audiences filmed storyboards rather than finished animation. The reports from the survey company recommended numerous cuts, as did Tartikoff. Bakshi fought against the cuts, and was fired from the production.

Now, though, the *Cool World* experience is definitely water over the dam, and Bakshi believes its failure prevented him from being involved with other "work-for-hire" productions.

"*Cool World* was the luckiest thing that could have happened to me, although at the time it was the worst thing that had happened to me," Bakshi declared. "I don't care if I ever make another Hollywood film. I'll find a way to finance my own feature films. I'll do it myself."

Bakshi is certainly not brooding about the past, and said he'd be a happy man if what he did the rest of his life was making shorts, as long as the shorts were done on his artistic terms. He described his contract with the Hanna-Barbera Shorts Program as being "an honest deal," and is ecstatic over the creative freedom he has.

Using "full" animation, Bakshi's team for the shorts involves both young artists starting out in animation and veterans. He is using the talent of a former UPA artist for the backgrounds of his shorts, and is also hiring an editor who worked for UPA.

Bakshi has completed the story board for his first short, a hilarious tale of life in the big city, fame, and music. If there was any doubt of Bakshi's enthusiasm for making shorts, it was completely forgotten as he performed the cartoon for us.

Waking back and forth in front of the dozens of drawings hung on a wall, Bakshi did more than just explain the action, and perform the voices, the sound effects, and part of the music...he became the cartoon!

Laughing along with us, his joy of creating something he loves was indeed easy to see.

Kricfalusi

From page 34

the unit concept to animation. He is quick to criticize television animation that has been more controlled by script-writers than animators, and questions the role that any person who can't draw has in the creation of a story for animation. While he acknowledged the contributions of writers such as the late Michael Maltese, he wants to see animators and directors be the individuals responsible for the creation of the story and gags.

"We've got to get the animation back in the country, at least in North America, and generate the humor from the cartoonists themselves, not from writers, not from executives. We've got to give the cartoon industry back to the cartoonists," he said.

Ask him what he likes in current animation, and you get a quick reply. "Not much, some independent things, that's about all," he said. "I watched *Duckman* for about 10 minutes, and it didn't hold my attention."

As the time for the signing approached I ventured a final question...with all of the critical statements he makes about the rather small animation industry, does he every worry about his public opinions costing him a job?

Kricfalusi considered the question for a moment, and said thoughtfully, "Well, I don't think I'll ever again work on a Saturday morning show."

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Walter Lantz:

A Life in Animation

An interview with the late animator and producer, and one of the nicest guys in the cartoon industry

by John Province

Until his death on March 22nd, Walter Lantz was animation's most eloquent and recognizable ambassador. In his excellent *Of Mice and Magic*, Leonard Maltin accurately described Lantz not as a pioneer, but rather as part of the second wave of artists who helped make animation an acceptable form of entertainment in the years

prior to World War I. He was present, and an active participant, during animation's awkward adolescence in the Teens, as well as its flowering into a globally accepted artform during its best years of the Thirties and Forties.

While the appeal of most of the Lantz characters failed to sustain a wide popularity that survived him, in his 70 year career he worked with and seemingly employed at one time or another, most of the successful artists and directors of his generation. The Lantz Studio almost served as a training ground and conduit through which animators utilized either on their way up or out of the industry. As his one-time employer, silent film producer Mack Sennett, Lantz had a good eye for raw talent, but could rarely keep it for long.

Many a promising career would commence at Lantz Studios, only to depart

when experience and greener pastures beckoned. The Lantz role of honor would include former employees such as Grim Natwick, Tex Avery, Virgil Ross, Jack Hannah, Fred Moore, Dick Lundy, Alex Lovy and many others.

The Lantz Studio was not a crucible for experimentation or innovative productions, though in his early years as an artist, Lantz participated in crude experiments for both both color and talking films as well as live-action combined with animation. Kept on a strict budget with a set agenda of thirteen films per year, the Lantz Studio did its best to maintain a steady output of reliable delivery of films with the best talent available. Studio veterans will include their tenure at Lantz almost parenthetically at the end of an interview. Rarely will any point to the productions there with great pride. More often what emerges is a warm personal remembrance of how they were treated by Walter Lantz as opposed to other studios where they may have done more memorable work.

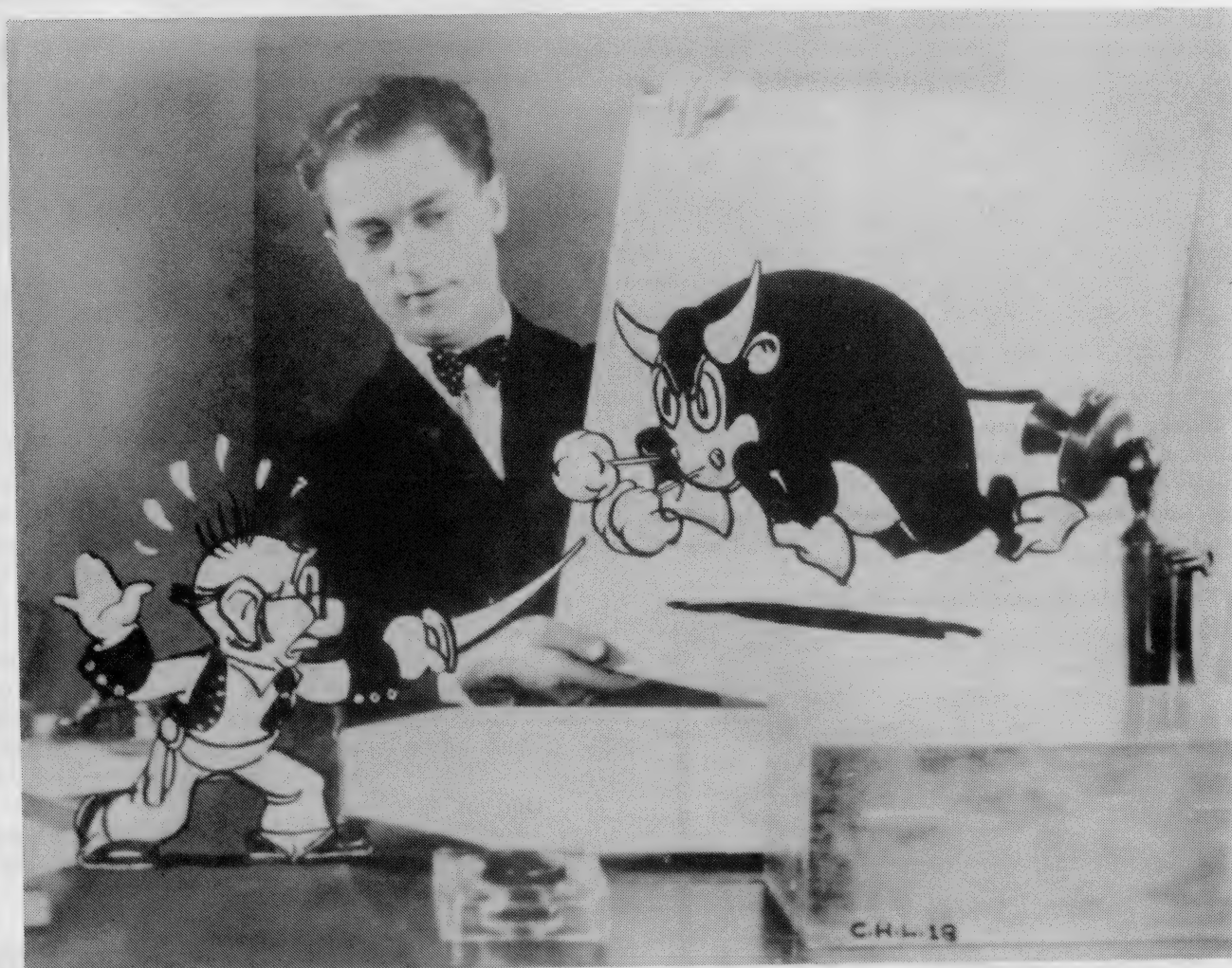
Not only does one never hear a negative comment about him, but the touching personal anecdotes abound, a commendable record in a town like Hollywood, but how much moreso in life itself. In the minds of these animators, it is Lantz himself they remember, not the films. Perhaps that remains the great legacy of Walter Lantz; the method in which he ran his studio rather than the films produced there.

When I met with him in July of 1992 he still maintained offices across the street from Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank. As I was escorted into his office by his secretary, a neatly dressed but very small elderly man rose from a massive oak desk. Covering the back wall were original Lantz character paintings and on a side sofa rested a stuffed Woody Woodpecker figure almost the size of the gentleman himself. The voice, so familiar from the introductions to the television program of the Fifties was friendly but businesslike.

Concentrating on the years 1915-1935,



The late Walter Lantz in 1992. (John Province photo)



Walter Lantz plays live-action straight man to the animated "Col. Heeza Liar" circa 1923. (from the personal collection of Walter Lantz)

I soon discovered that I could fire questions at will as quickly as I liked, and he could return answers with equal rapidity. The cadence of speech I felt I might have to employ in deference to his age was unneeded. He was sharp, alert, current, and with an amazing memory. The decades fell away, and before long I was being taken on a stroll through animation history by Walter Lantz, the nicest guy in the business.

– John Province

Q: Let's begin with your earliest days in the business. You had your start as an office boy with Hearst *New York American*. How did

you get your job with Hearst?

WL: I was working in a garage, and taking the Zimmer Correspondence Course in Cartooning.

I used to make drawings of the mechanics who worked there and tack them up on the wall. One of the men who stored his car there named Fred Kafka became interested in my drawings. He'd been a cartoonist for the school paper at Yale when he attended there. He said "Walter, how would you like to study art?". I said I'd love it but couldn't afford lessons. He said he would pay for it, and I come and work at his

office. For the first year he paid my tuition, which was about \$15 a month. I lived at the YMCA on 125th Street in New York. I had classes every night from seven until ten at George Bridgeman's art classes. George Bridgeman was one of the most famous anatomy teachers in America. Norman Rockwell and several others had been students of his. My sketching was from nude models. The first time I had to do a charcoal nude I damned near died! I was just 15 years old, and had never seen a naked lady before, can you imagine?

Q: Some pretty famous cartoonists were

with the *American* at that time, Fredrick Oppen...



WL: Yes Oppen, also Winsor McCay who was the most important at that time, and George Kerr, who used to do the beautiful covers for their weekly magazine. I was just the kid in the office who cleaned their brushes, and ran out to get beer and hot dogs for them, but I got to know them all very well. The cartoon section was separate from the magazine section. Their office boy was Milt Gross. Remember him? Milt worked for the cartoonist. I worked for the "legitimate" artists.

Q: Did they know you had artistic ambitions?
WL: They knew because I was attending the Art Student's League in New York at the same time. They were all very helpful and once in a while would let me do some lettering or something.

Q: In your autobiography you described seeing McCay's vaudeville act where he debuted *Gertie the Dinosaur*.

WL: Yes, that was the first animation I ever saw. McCay made all the drawings himself, some 20,000 of them. He would project the cartoon on a screen, they were just line drawing, not colored or anything. He walked out onto the stage, and would talk to the dinosaur. His big scene, which was a sensation at the time, was when he would hold up an apple and he'd animated the dinosaur picking it up.

Q: You were hired to work by the Hearst Studio not too long after that. How long had it been in existence when you arrived?

WL: Not very long. There were some studios then, but not many; *Felix the Cat* was going and Fleischer's, but that was about all there was at that time.

One of the editors had hired Gregory LaCava who had been a cartoonist on the *New York World* to be the producer of the new studio. They were making films of famous characters from the newspaper like *Bringing Up Father*, *Krazy Kat*, *Happy Hooligan*, and *The Katzenjammer Kids*. He told me "Walter, Gregory LaCava is a good friend of mind and he's starting up an animation studio to produce. Why don't you do over there and apply?" I went out there with a letter saying "Put this kid to work, he has a lot of talent." I got the

job at \$7 a week.

Q: Who was working there when you arrived?

WL: Well for an old guy of 91 it's kind of hard to remember. Frank Moser was one. George Stallings was the most important one as I remember it. No one had much experience and other than him there was really no one there you could call an expert. As a matter of fact I would say that George Stallings was the very best of his time. LaCava assigned me to work with him and clean up his drawings. I gradually became an inbetween, and would inbetween George's drawings. He'd do about every fifth one, and I'd do inbetween those. That's how I learned to animate. George became a very dear friend of mine.

Q: This may be reaching a bit, but can you sum up what it was really like to work in the business at that time? Someone like myself can only imagine it.

WL: Well there were about 50 or 60 working there, and we were really a bunch of happy go-lucky fellas; always playing jokes on each other. We'd send out for hot dogs and beer for lunch. It's always been fun work.

Q: Do you remember your first piece of animation? How did you know when you were ready?

WL: Yes, it was a *Happy Hooligan*. We just worked into it from scratch. Cleaning up drawings and then inbetweening. I came up the hard way, working with the animators. That's the best school. You learn by doing it.

Q: And how did you do it?

WL: Those were the days before cels were originated, and we animated everything on paper. We had to pencil every single drawing and there was no one to help us out. Then these pencil drawings were photographed. We didn't have backgrounds. The background was just a strip we'd put down on pegs and then place the drawing over it. We couldn't have anything that crossed a line. If a character walked over to a chair, you'd have to draw the chair on the drawing



A trade ad for the early Bray cartoons based on Hearst characters. (from the collection of John Province)



or it would wiggle all over the screen.

Q: Did you ever get any reaction from the original creators of these comic strips such as George Herriman or Rudolph Dirks?

WL: No, never any trouble or anything. We just drew them.

Q: Did you ever regard animation as a fad? Many of your contemporaries did.

WL: No, when I saw our animated cartoons in the first run theatres, and Max Fleischer's running on Broadway, I knew they would be around for a long time. The audiences would laugh at the simplest things, someone slipping on a banana peel.

Q: So you would go see your stuff at the theatres or watch other studios films?

WL: Oh yes, in fact we used to preview our films in theatres to see how they would go over. If it didn't get a laugh we change it. Disney was a great believer in that, and so was I at Universal. Everytime we made a new film we'd take a fresh print to run at the theatre, and then cut out the stuff that didn't work and re-animate it. Disney became a perfectionist, he would throw out entire pictures until he thought it was right. That's why his films were good, but expensive. We sure couldn't afford to do that.

Q: Charlie Chaplin was a great inspiration to a lot of the early animators. Otto Messmer was studying him, so was Disney. LaCava had your crew watch him too. What did you learn from Chaplin that helped you in your animation?

WL: What I used to do was project Chaplin's films on paper and then trace them. When you flipped the paper you really had a full action movie. That's how I really learned to make a character move and all the possibilities there were in making these drawings. His actions were so broad, they made great animation. His humour was very broad too, very much like we would use in an animated cartoon; throwing pies, dumping kegs of water on people, shooting them with dynamite, all that kind of stuff.

Q: Did you follow a set script at Hearst or did you do any writing for the films?

WL: LaCava did the storyboards which was really a long comic strip of a couple of hundred drawings telling the whole story. Then there would be captions underneath to explain the action. I'd been there a couple of years and graduated to animator when Hearst closed the studio. They weren't helping to sell any more newspapers. The only one he kept was LaCava to animate a series called *Silk Hat Harry*. Aren't you amazed at my memory? It isn't easy! I was assigned to do *Jerry on the Job*. It was a half minute cartoon tacked on the end of the Hearst newsreel. We made about fifty of them. They were very short. I met Grim Natwick at Hearst. He was a friend of Gregory's.

Q: Let's talk a bit about Grim.

WL: Greg brought Grim in, and introduced me. He said, "This is Grim Natwick. He's a good friend of mine. Show him how to animate." Grim was a great artist. He had been doing girl pages for the *American Weekly*. He and Will Pogany used to draw for the Hearst magazines. He was darned good, and animating within a year.

Q: A lot of advances happened at Hearst during a very short time such as the invention of the background.

WL: That was Bill Nolan.

Q: He really helped put animation on its feet in those early days.

WL: We credit Bill with what we called "rubberhose animation," and he also created the pan. You show a character standing in one spot and just move his legs like he's on a treadmill. But rather than a treadmill we'd have a long sheet of paper with a background on it. Every time you move the drawing, you move the pan. Bill discovered that by moving that background you could make the character look like he was moving.

Q: What happened when the *Jerry on the Job* series ended?

WL: George Stallings and I were hired by J.R. Bray. I worked with (Raoul) Barré for a short time on the *Mutt and Jeff*s and then to Universal. So you see I've only had four jobs in seventy years! Bray actually hired Stallings to do *Colonel Heeza Liar*, and I went with him as his assistant. Stallings would act in the pictures with the cartoons, but he never left his desk. I was with Stallings there from 1922 to 1926, and after that he left to work for Disney. Bray came to me and said, "Walter, you have a lot of experience, how would you like to take over the whole department?" I said, "What department? There's only two of us?" He said, "No, there's only one of you. You'll also be the writer and act in the films too."

Q: Was this before Fleischer's *Out of the Inkwell* series?

WL: Just after. We were the second ones to do live action with animation. I made over a hundred pictures for Bray that way, and in every one I played a character in the film.

Q: Bray has a reputation for having run a tight ship, but you managed to do well there when many others did not.

WL: The secret was to get along with his wife because she was a pretty rough character.

Bray was very strict, and he wanted his money's worth. You had to keep regular hours, that meant nine to five and Saturdays, too. We used to make a six-minute cartoon for about \$900. It was just a business to him. When Stallings left, I took over the animation on *Colonel Heeza Liar* and also worked on *Dinky Doodle* and *Weakheart*. I took on a fella named Clyde Geronimi, and he learned how to animate under me. He later went to Disney, and become a director and directed part of *Snow White*.

Q: The *Dinky Doodles* were live action and animation, how long did it take you to make one?

WL: Usually about one a month.



Q: So on that kind of schedule you must have really had to crank out the drawings.

WL: Well, not really. In those days we would use one or two thousand drawings for a typical film. The live action was almost half the picture. We'd have 600 feet of live action and then 200 or 300 feet of animation. That made up the seven minute playing time for the theatres.

Q: You filmed the live segments all over the Los Angeles area?

WL: Yes, we'd go to the beach or the mountains. I remember one *Colonel Heeza Liar* in particular where we were out in the forest, and I was tired. I sat down on an animated egg to rest. We animated the egg breaking open, and a live turtle came out of the egg with Colonel Heeza Liar riding it. We did a lot of things like that; Colonel

Heeza Liar feeding animated worms to live birds and the like.

Q: How did you photograph the animation combined with the live action?

WL: We had a cameraman photograph the live action. Then, they would project one frame at a time on paper, and I would animate on the paper with a cel. Then it was re-photographed with the cell on top of it. That's 60 years before *Roger Rabbit*! They got all the credit for that, and I did it 60 years ago!

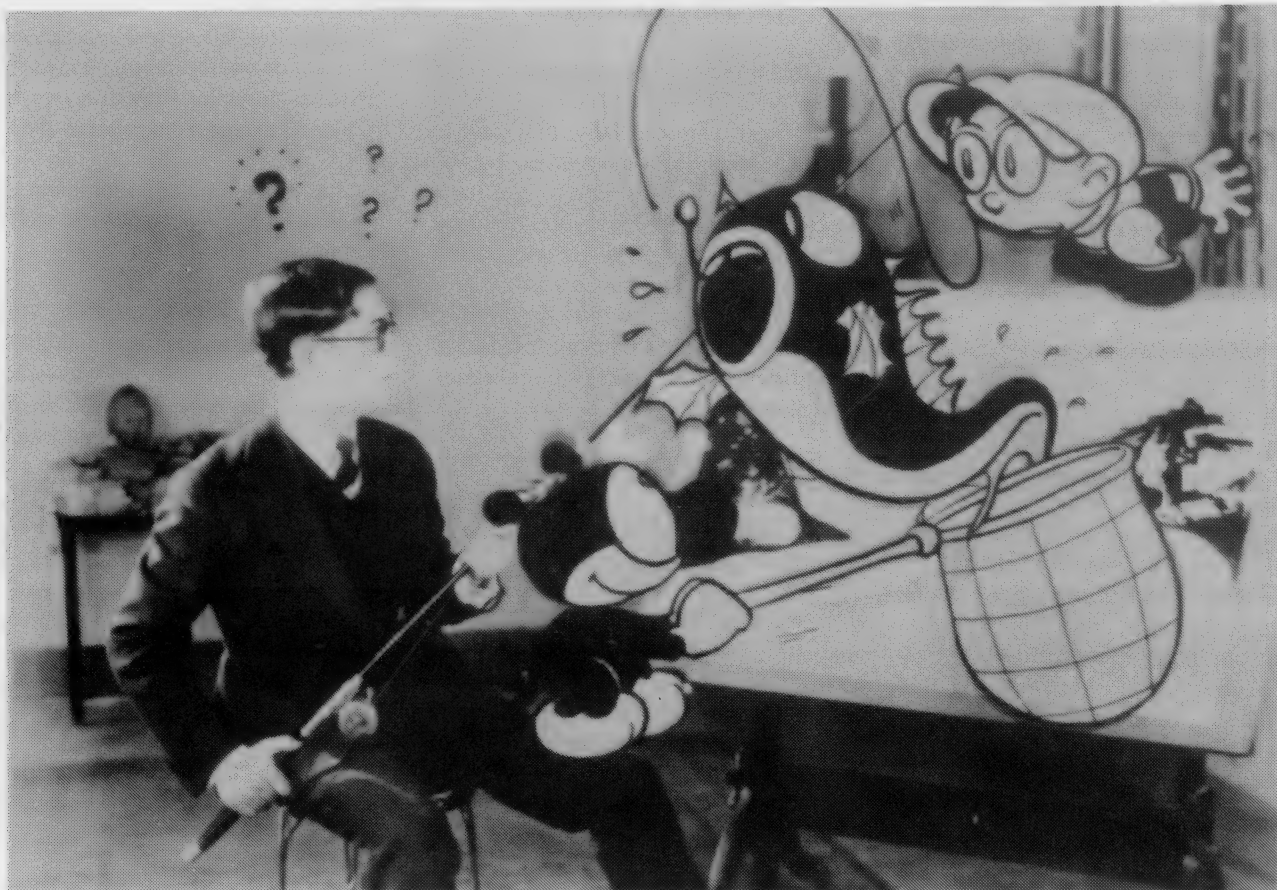
Q: Were you a good actor?

WL: I couldn't act my way out a paper bag! I became an actor later when I made two

comedies for Bray Studios in California. Bray said, "Walter, you're too good looking, you need to look funnier". So they put round glasses on me so I'd look like Harold Lloyd.

Q: You were also involved in some early experiments for talking films while you were with Bray. That was in 1924?

WL: Yes, I was working for Bray, and they were talking about having sound pictures. Bray had me in some tests because he wanted to be the first one to make a talking picture. I went over to the studio with my ukelele that I was playing at the time. They set me up in front of a big wheel with all sorts of little indentations in it. I didn't know what it was! This thing turned slowly as I played my ukelele. Whatever it was doing, it put the sound on a record. It was planned to be a live action film, but not with me. It never materialized. Mechanically it just didn't



Walter Lantz with "Dinky Doodle and Weakheart" from a 1924 film. (from the personal collection of Walter Lantz)

work. There's a photo around here somewhere of me in front of it with my ukelele but that's all that's still around.



Q: You came to California in 1927 and worked with Mack Sennett at his studio.

WL: Yes I went to work in the story department at Mack Sennett. I got the job because they were trying to put animation in some of the comedies without much success. I could do it because that's what I'd done for Bray, animation and live action. The first one I worked on showed two soldiers in a trench with a big cootie. If you don't know what that is, it's a parasite that gets into the clothing and causes violent scratching. They wanted to show this thing walking across the battlefield on six legs and when the soldiers saw it, they jumped out of the trench, and ran off into the horizon.

I knew Frank Hopper, the head of the story department, and he told me they had a real problem trying to get this cootie to chase the soldiers. Different people had tried it but no one had come up with it. I said "For gosh sakes, I can make that up in a week for you!" All it was was a bug walking across the screen! I not only had him walking across the screen, but walking around the lenses of the binoculars, and it was finished a week later. I showed it to the boys in the story department and they thought it was great! They told me, "Don't show it to the old man. If it only took a week, he won't appreciate it." So I showed it to him in three weeks!

(laughs) They put me on the payroll at 400 bucks a week, and I thought it was great! Everyone was in on the joke except Mack Sennett. Finally we run this thing for him, and he fell out of his chair laughing at it. He said, "Walter, this is the funniest thing I've ever seen!". He hired me for not quite a year.

Christmas came, and he used to lay everybody off until the spring. Well everyone was getting laid off except me, and the guys were saying "Well, Hell, Lantz, why haven't you gotten your notice?" After they were all gone he called me into his office and said "Son, you did a good job here, and I didn't want to embarrass you by laying you off in front of everybody else." (laughs) So he let me go but he did it politely. After Sennett, I went over to Hal Roach's. Leo McCary was a good friend of mine. They'd done a Laurel and Hardy film where they were asleep and dreaming of flying elephants. So I animated the elephants. They thought it was a miracle!

Q: Would you have left animation to stay in live action comedies?

WL: I would have like to have stayed in the story department. The animation just came up accidentally. After that I went over to Universal Studios and animated a scene about Andy Gump. He was dreaming he was going to the moon on his mattress. So I made

scenes of him in different sizes on a mattress, and they thought it was great. So I was on the lot the day Disney left Universal.

Q: Let's talk about that.

WL: He was doing *Oswald the Rabbit*, and he had the idea of wanting to do a mouse. The big brass at Universal said that a mouse will never go any where; "Paul Terry has done thousands of them. We'll stay with Oswald". So Disney quit, and went to Columbia with the mouse character, and you know what happened with Disney and the mouse.

Q: That conflicts with his version that he left Universal, and created Mickey Mouse because he'd been cheated out of Oswald.

WL: He wasn't cheated out of anything. He went off peddling the mouse around, and finally sold it to Columbia. Universal owned Oswald, they had the copyright. Sam Ronken was a producer, and I used to drive him to parties and poker games because he had a Rolls Royce that he couldn't drive. That's how I got to know Carl Laemmle. I was on the lot doing live action shots and Carl I said to me, "Son, you have ten years in animation and I know your background. Walt Disney has left us, and we want you to set up our animation studio and make you the head of it". They didn't have a desk or drawing board or anything. I told Walt I was going to



Oswald the Lucky Rabbit as seen in a trade ad announcing his first sound cartoons. (John Province collection)



take over Oswald and he said, "God bless you, Walt. I'm doing just great!"

Q: No ill feelings?

WL: None at all, and he remained a dear friend right up until the day he died. Any bitterness you hear about is just a lot of crap.

Q: You became very close to Carl Laemmle, didn't you?

WL: He took a real liking to me, and was very good to me. At one time he wanted me to direct two-reel comedies for him, but I said, "Aw gee, Uncle Carl, I can't do that. I'm an animator. I don't have enough experience to try and direct two-reel comedies."

Q: You made what you feel was the first color animated cartoon in 1930.

WL: That was *King of Jazz* with Paul Whiteman. They wanted a short to show how Paul Whiteman became the king of jazz. I told them I could do it very simply as animated film, which I did. It was about four minutes long and ran during the opening of the film. This was five years before *Flowers and Trees*. We used to buy paint that was already mixed instead of painting everything in black and white. We did it that way for years.

Q: Can we talk a little about a fellow you hired in 1933 named Tex Avery?

WL: Fred Avery came to me as a young man wanting a job and I gave him a job washing cels.

He showed me some of his drawings, and I thought he had some talent so I put him in as an inbetweener with Bill Nolan whom I'd brought out to California. He went from inbetweener to animator and then went to Warners as a director. He directed for me, too. He came up pretty fast. He was only with me a couple of years. I've told that story several times in interviews, and really don't want to repeat it again. After all the guy's dead now anyway. [Author's note: If anyone knows what story he may have been referring to I would sure like to hear about it.]

Q: The Oswald series was a very successful for you.

WL: Very successful. I made 260 Oswald cartoons. I later changed Oswald from a black rabbit to a white one because the comic book company said they didn't want a comic with a black rabbit. They thought a white one look better, and that kids visualized rabbits as white. So I changed him.

Q: If you had to form a roster of the top talents of your time who would be on it?

WL: You would really have to work beside them to know who was best. Disney developed a very high quality of animator because Disney wanted perfection. If an animator made a scene, they would shoot a pencil test of it. Every animator had a moviola in his studio, and Walt studied every scene. If he didn't like it, he'd throw it out! The reason I could never do that at Universal is because we never had a second chance. I did photograph everything in pencil, and then we'd put the sound to it. Then we'd run the whole thing in the projection room. I'd watch it with the animator, and tell them, "You need a few more drawings here", or "this action isn't broad enough", or "let's add a close up and give it a little more expression, and then it would go out. Disney would change a scene twenty times before he got it right, and bless him, I'm glad he did it. He did a lot for the industry.

Q: You've been in the business seven decades, and are the last one from those early days.

WL: I'm 91, a young 91, and I think I have a pretty good memory for all these questions you've been putting to me. I've had a pretty wonderful life.

Q: Do you keep up with current animation?

WL: The only sad thing I see in current animation is that they are required to turn out so much. The agencies and the companies want them very fast. They don't know until September what they have to have done in October. When Hanna-Barbera first started out they couldn't possibly produce a cartoon with 7,000 drawings in it like we used to. They had to turn out what they called limited

Continued on Page 68



Walter Lantz

Scarce late-in-life drawing of Oswald the Lucky Rabbit by Walter Lantz drawn shortly before his death. (John Province collection)

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WOODY!



Pencil sketch of an agitated Woody by veteran Lantz director Dick Lundy. Artwork courtesy of Vintage Ink and Paint and the estate of Grim Natwick. (© Walter Lantz Productions)

The Life and Times of Woody Woodpecker

He's wild! He's crazy!
He's the most famous of
Walter Lantz's creations.

by *Jim Korkis*

"Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh. Heh-heh-heh-HEH-heh. That's the Woody Woodpecker song." When that song was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Song in 1948 (it lost out to "Buttons and Bows"), Woody Woodpecker had been a cartoon star for almost a decade.

In an animated universe filled with famous dogs, cats, mice, ducks and bears, Woody was the only woodpecker to ever make a significant impact. He became the most famous of Walter Lantz's creations, and was as closely identified with his creator as Mickey Mouse was with Walt Disney.

The audience immediately embraced the wild character, and it was a love affair

that has survived over half a century despite poor stories, limited animation, and often unimaginative direction.

There was never any shyness or hesitancy about Woody. He knew what he wanted, and nothing and no one prevented him from getting it. He was supremely self-confident, and felt he deserved the best simply because he was who he was. The emotional and physical costs to other characters were not even a passing concern to him. If Woody needed gas for his car or food or lodging or the love of a girl, he was an unstoppable whirlwind destroying everything and everyone in his path.

Very rarely was Woody the victim who had to retaliate against the machinations of other characters such as crooked insurance salesmen or sadistic shopkeepers. Especially in the early cartoons, it was Woody who started the trouble, and took great joy in aggravating the situation to epic proportions

as his mood swung from hysterical joy to explosive anger.

Woody was almost a blur of constant, often extremely violent, movement which may explain why there never seemed to be a consensus of agreement regarding his size. In some cartoons he might be as small as a real woodpecker while in other cartoons he might be as large as Donald Duck. There were even examples of his size varying within the same cartoon where one moment he is small enough to be held in another character's hand while later he is as tall as the other character's waist.

Like other long-lived cartoon counterparts such as Mickey Mouse, Woody eventually became domesticated by the Fifties with just a hint of the wild-eyed, ill-proportioned nuisance who made his first appearance in 1940.

After the donation of a panda to the Chicago Zoo gained national attention,



Walter Lantz had his studio capitalize on the publicity by creating little Andy Panda in 1939. Andy was a bright young boy panda bear with a large, gruff father who like many such characters of the time seemed to have a touch of actor Wallace Beery in him. Lantz felt he had found a popular character who would sustain him for several cartoons.

According to legend, while Lantz was on his honeymoon at a cabin at Sherwood Lake in California, his bliss was interrupted repeatedly by an annoying woodpecker. At the worst of times, the bird would tap away on the roof, searching for acorns hidden under the roof shingles.

In interviews, Lantz would continue to embellish the story, at one time even claiming that he "threw rocks at the bird and he would not go away. I was going to shoot him, but my wife told me there was a law against it."

The legend continues that upon returning to the studio, Lantz regaled his staff with his misadventures. It was decided to use Lantz's experience as the basis of a new Andy Panda cartoon, *Knock Knock* (1940). Lantz has told some version of this famous story many times over the years (even one time claiming the woodpecker made holes in the roof so the rain leaked through on them) when people asked how Woody was created. While a similar incident may have happened to Lantz,

the cartoon was released in 1940 and Lantz got married almost a year later in 1941. Like many such legends, the story probably does have elements of truth in it, but simplified the creation process for a general audience unfamiliar with how animation is really created.

When *Knock Knock* was released, it stood out from the four previously released Andy Panda cartoons. One of the elements that probably made a significant difference was the contributions of storyman Ben "Bugs" Hardaway. Hardaway had recently come to Lantz's from Warner Brothers where he had been involved in the development of two wild and crazy characters, the early Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. (In fact, Bugs Bunny inherited his first name from Hardaway's nickname.) Certainly there are similarities between the quick, erratic, almost constant character movement of the early Bugs and Daffy and with the first Woody.

Another Warners connection was Woody's voice. It was supplied by Mel Blanc who, of course, had done similar chores for Bugs and Daffy. It was Blanc who came up with the maniacal laugh which had a machine-gun-like rapidity. Blanc had apparently been doing a version of the laugh since his high school days where he would perform it in echo, empty hallways to the consternation of teachers in their classrooms.

The laugh was definitely a key signature item that helped propel Woody to attention. Lantz often pointed out that even though Woody cartoons had been shown in over 72 countries, the famous laugh was the only part that was not dubbed. (Later, Blanc would take legal action against Lantz for its continued use after Blanc left the studio.)

Knock Knock was to be just another typical Andy Panda installment, capitalizing on Papa Panda's growing frustration to being interrupted by a grotesque looking, smart alecky woodpecker. The loveable but hopelessly middle-class Panda family never stood a chance against the unrestrained insanity of Woody.

Lantz had directed this cartoon himself and when audience reaction was so strong for the new character, Lantz also directed the first official Woody Woodpecker cartoon in 1941 which was entitled simply *Woody Woodpecker* (although it is also known as *The Cracked Nut*). Woody's forest friends are concerned about his sanity but after they guide him to a psychiatrist, Woody drives the good doctor crazy before the end of the cartoon.

Once again, the cartoon was such a success that distributors demanded more of the wacky bird. Lantz was finding himself becoming more and more involved with the running of the studio so by 1942 he turned over his bird-brained creation to other directors.

Alex Lovy handled the character for a while but his Woody cartoons, like *Ace in the Hole* (1942), were solid but lacked the intensity of the earlier cartoons.

It wasn't until 1944 that Woody's original frenetic charm was recaptured when director Shamus Culhane was assigned to direct *Barber of Seville*. For this cartoon, studio layout man Art Heinemann redesigned Woody's grotesque appearance and coloring. The bright colors were replaced with more sedate looking cobalt blue feathers and white breast. Woody gained a few pounds making



Two of Woody's incarnations. At left, a pencil sketch of the wilder Woody of the mid-Forties, and at right, the streamlined contemporary woodpecker. Artwork courtesy of Vintage Ink and Paint and the estate of Grim Natwick. (© Walter Lantz Productions)



him look plumper except in his legs which were now trimmer and instead of being bright orange became blue as well, except for yellow feet.

Woody had to be in top shape to handle the fast paced succession of physical gags in Culhane's cartoons which also included *Beach Nut* (1944) and *The Reckless Driver* (1946). Whether destroying Wally Walrus's peace-of-mind (and his seaside amusement park) or trying to renew his driver's license, Woody was at the top of his form.

Later in 1946, ex-Disney director Dick Lundy took over the character but was not pleased by the wildness of Culhane's version. Lundy brought to the series a Disney timing

and an almost fanatical concern for lush, soft quality animation. Lundy definitely provided some memorable moments for the woodpecker from *Musical Moments from Chopin* (1947) to *Wet Blanket Policy* (1948) but he did transform Woody into a softer character who was now atypically the victim.

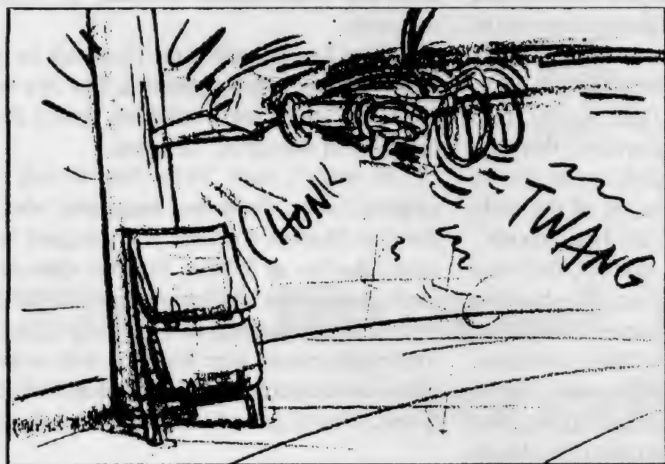
In 1950, another change happened to Woody. He got a new voice. Blanc had been placed on an exclusive contract with Warners and various fill-in voices had done the dialog over the years including Hardaway himself. However, since the Woody cartoons were

now the primary release from the studio, a permanent voice person needed to be found.

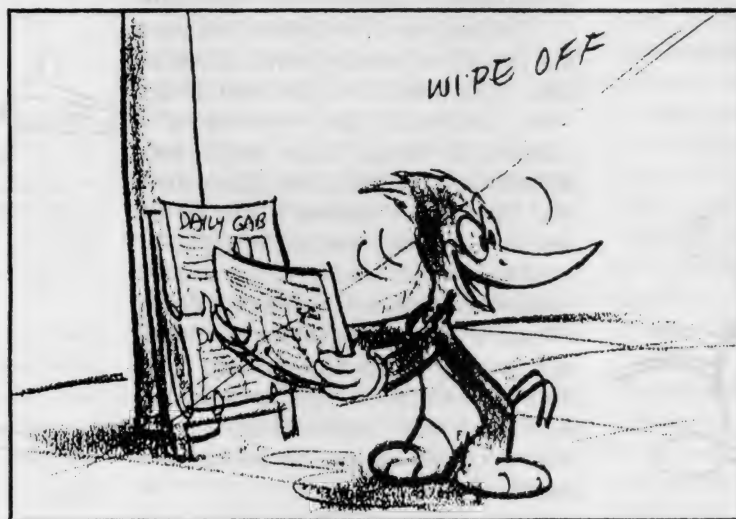
Grace Stafford, Lantz's wife and an actress, had been doing voices for the cartoons, but primarily the female characters. When Lantz was auditioning for a new voice actor for the bothersome bird, Grace anonymously slipped in her own taped tryout, and an unsuspecting Lantz picked his wife.

Her first time voicing the character was in a Woody segment animated for the feature film, *Destination Moon* (1950). It was Woody's function to explain the principles of rocket propulsion, an unfamiliar concept to audiences in those days.

Grace's influence on Woody was



WOODY PULLS HIMSELF OUT OF POLE - LANDS ON SIDEWALK - SHAKES HIS HEAD - SEES PAPER



An excerpt from a mid-Forties Woody storyboard. Artwork courtesy of Vintage Ink and Paint and the estate of Grim Natwick. (© Walter Lantz Productions)



immediately noticeable. She had always felt the character was too extreme, and she toned down her vocal interpretation. LaVerne Harding, one of the few female animators at the time, once again redesigned the character. For six cartoons, Woody was given yellow gloves (to match his yellow feet). As early as Alex Lovy's tenure, Harding had been assigned the "cute" scenes to animate. Now that influence became more pronounced.

Budget restrictions further limited the wild, non-stop action which had been the character's trademark. However, these restrictions did not bother Woody's new director, Paul J. Smith, who took over directing the character in 1953, and would continue that job until Lantz closed his studio in 1972.

It is Smith's version that may be best known to today's audiences thanks to those episodes almost continual exposure on television. At best, Smith was a competent but unexciting director who was always able to complete his cartoons within their small budget, which was one of the reasons Lantz's studio survived for so many years after other studios like Disney, MGM and Warners found making short cartoons unprofitable.

Between 1953 and 1966, a handful of other directors like Jack Hannah, Sid Marcus and Alex Lovy did a very few Woody cartoons but it was Smith who was considered the primary director. Smith's cartoons spoofed popular topics like Westerns with cartoons like *Hot Noon* and science fiction with cartoons like *Woodpecker from Mars*.

Television gave new life to Woody. *The Woody Woodpecker Show* first appeared in 1957. Three of Lantz's theatrical cartoons were surrounded by some new animation and a live action introduction by Lantz (and directed by Jack Hannah who had done the same job for Walt Disney's early tv efforts). Only twenty-six episodes were made, but they were syndicated and re-cut and syndicated again for many years.

In 1970, Woody invaded Saturday morning with an NBC show featuring post-1948 cartoons but even when these milder Woody cartoons were heavily edited, Lantz still faced charges of violence in his cartoons. Lantz pleaded that there was a difference between slapstick and violence with little effect.

In 1972, the last eight new Woody Woodpecker cartoons were released. Even with limited budgets, Lantz found he could no longer produce theatrical shorts. However, Woody still continued to provide income. Woody had been one of the most merchandised of all cartoon characters. His image still continues to appear on many public service projects and a seventy-five foot Woody balloon was a standard at Macy's Thanksgiving Parades over the years. Japan even has a small theme park devoted to Woody.

In the late Seventies, Universal repackaged 185 cartoons for the syndication market where they wouldn't have to be as heavily edited as for Saturday morning. These cartoons spanned the entire range of Woody's career, and a new generation of fans fell in love with the woodpecker.

In 1979 at the 51st Academy Awards, comedian Robin Williams presented Walter Lantz with an honorary Oscar "for bringing joy and laughter to every part of the world through his unique animated motion pictures." (An animated Woody, done by Virgil Ross, appeared on the screen to share the honor and thank Lantz.)

In 1985, Lantz sold his library of cartoons to MCA/Universal, and the studio tried to aggressively market the character with everything from his own "900" story phone line to a new syndicated series to a cameo in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). Like other highly popular cartoon superstars,

Woody appears on everything from limited edition coin sets to special hand painted cel recreations. A costumed Woody wanders the streets of both Universal Studios theme parks where he still delights children. (Universal Cartoon Studios is making new Woody theatrical shorts but due to a contractual arrangement with Saatchi and Saatchi Program Exchange that controls the sixty-five hours of Lantz cartoons now being syndicated, there is no chance that those new cartoons can be released on tv in this country without violating the exclusivity clause. As a result, foreign countries may be getting the chance shortly to see new Woody Woodpecker cartoons but American fans may have to wait quite a while.)

Woody's persistence and sense of fun helped him to survive some of the worst conditions possible for an animated character. He appeared in almost two hundred cartoons and he is instantly recognized in countries around the world. However, his greatest accomplishment may have been the fact that he brought recognition to an animation pioneer who was genuinely well-liked and respected by his peers. The gentle, soft-spoken Lantz may have seemed to have little in common with the insanely loud Woody yet neither could have found the adoration of millions of cartoon fans without the other.



Jim Korkis is a very tired but well-known animation historian. He mentions that he feels genuinely enriched from having had the opportunity to meet and talk with Walter Lantz.



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Lantz on Video



One would think a half-century worth of work would be better represented than by a mere hour of cartoons.

by G. Michael Dobbs

Walter Lantz was part of the active animation industry from 1916 to 1972, when he produced the final theatrical Woody Woodpecker shorts. After that time, he remained very busy with licensing his characters and overseeing syndication packages.

That's 56 years of production and another 22 years of administering his films and characters. Few people in the animation industry can boast of that kind of longevity.

And yet of all his contemporaries, Walter Lantz fares the poorest with the representation of his career on home video.

For all of that over half-century of production, right now two half-hour tapes from MCA constitutes what is legally available of the Lantz library. Fifty-six years equals one hour of Woody Woodpecker cartoons.

The two tapes, *The Woody Woodpecker Anniversary Collector's Edition*, Volumes One and Two are certainly not a bad introduction to Lantz's most famous character. These tapes offer a full representation of the woodpecker's career from his buck-toothed screwball phase to his late-Forties re-design to his more anemic offerings of the late Fifties.

One can easily see just how the changes in the motion picture industry affected theatrical cartoons by watching these tapes, and how, unless one had superior talent at the drawing boards, the decline in budgets frequently eliminated the chance for a truly funny and inventive cartoon.

These two tapes just don't do Lantz justice. There are two more compilations, both now long out-of-print, that are worth tracking down. Produced in 1983, a MCA release entitled *Woody Woodpecker* has

Woody's first appearance on screen (in the Andy Panda short *Knock Knock*), two of the Musical Miniatures series, several other decent Woodys, and two of the four shorts Tex Avery made during his second tenure with Lantz.

The real bonus of this tape is a 10 minute documentary in which Lantz discusses his career. Clips from one of his silent *Dinky Doodle* shorts are shown along with archival photographs, and a segment from the Oswald cartoon, *Confidence*.

The second compilation tape is entitled *The World of Andy Panda*, and features 80 minutes-worth of Lantz's second-most popular star. The Andy Panda cartoons

seemed to have followed a format of Andy innocently falling into confrontations that he could never seem to win. I found it difficult to sit through cartoon after cartoon where Andy is always the victim, and never gets the upper hand, although he should. But then again, I always rooted for Sylvester to finally get a Tweetie dinner.

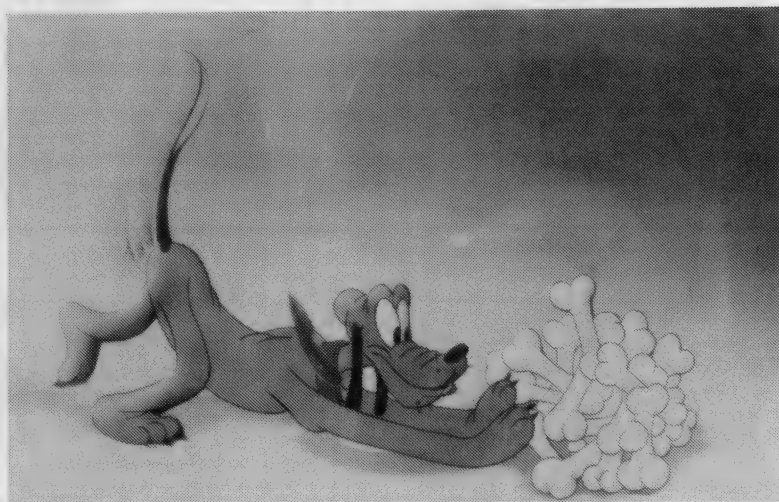
These two tapes from the Eighties certainly makes viewers realize there is more to Lantz's career than an hour's worth of Woody Woodpecker cartoons. Personally, I'd love to see more of Lantz's silent and early sound work. If *Confidence* is any indication, there are some fascinating cartoons that deserve to be seen on home video.

What about it MCA? 



A mid-Forties model sheet for Lantz's other star, Andy Panda. Artwork courtesy of Vintage Ink and Paint and the estate of Grim Natwick. (© Walter Lantz Productions)

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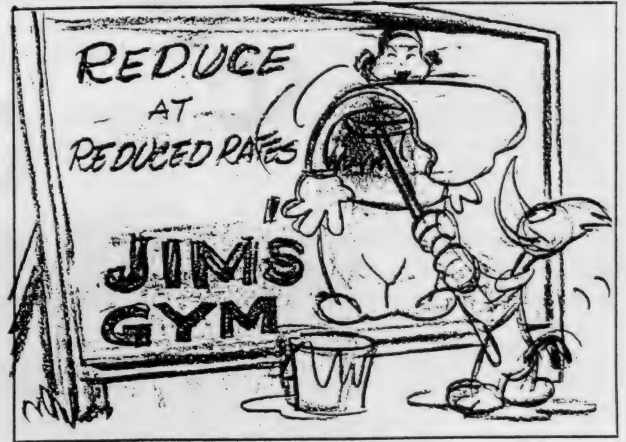
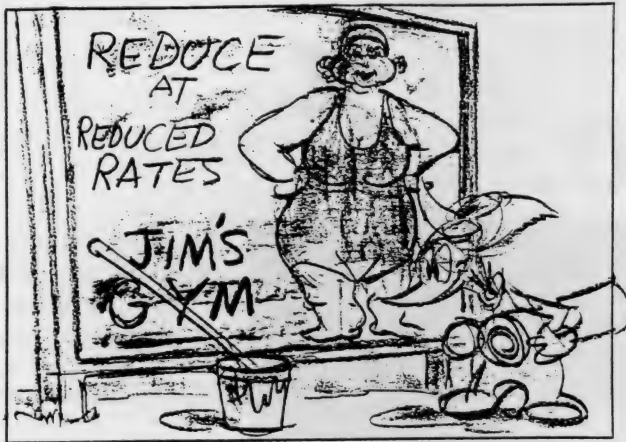
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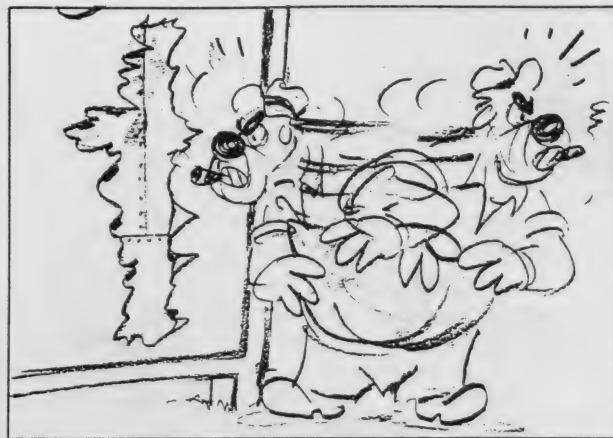
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The Art of the Storyboard



Storyboard from *The Cracked Nut* courtesy of Vintage Ink and Paint
and the estate of Grim Natwick. (© Walter Lantz Productions)



The Lion King's "Mane" Men

An interview with animators Andreas Deja and Ruben Aquino

by Mike Lyons

When it comes to heroes and villains, Andreas Deja and Ruben Aquino have all the bases covered. The two Disney animators have provided audiences with some of the nicest, and nastiest, characters in the studio's history. Disney's latest animated feature, *The Lion King*, a story of a young lion named Simba forced into exile by his evil Uncle Scar, allows the two animators to continue this trend.

From a young age, Andreas Deja's goal was to be a Disney animator. Now working at the studio, he admits he sometimes still can't believe he's there, "It's exciting", he says. "Sometimes you drive to work and pinch yourself. But you don't want to rest on your laurels, because the goal is to always get better and better."

Andreas, who was born in Poland and raised in Germany, actually first applied for a job as a Disney animator at the age of 10. Using a German-to-English dictionary, young Andreas wrote a letter to the studio after seeing *The Jungle Book*. Disney replied by saying that they were fully staffed, but they were always on the lookout for new talent.

Years later, after finishing high school and artistic training, Andreas applied again and this time was accepted. His early animation work includes *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, *The Black Cauldron* and *The Great Mouse Detective*.

He also served as supervising animator on such characters as King Triton in *The Little Mermaid* and Mickey in *The Prince and the Pauper*. But it was Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* and Jafar in *Aladdin* that has brought Andreas to the attention of animation buffs everywhere.

Talking with Andreas, one gets a sense of the passion he has for animation. On trying to live up to the legacy of the "Nine

Old Men", he says, "It's not a question of doing what the old guys did and moving a dog exactly like they did in *Lady and the Tramp*. It's just the degree of excellence that you're always after. Some animators are less bothered by that...", he then laughs and says, "...and others, like me, are driven crazy by it!"

Deja's greatest artistic influence has been Milt Kahl, (one of the legendary "Nine"). "Milt was probably the century's greatest draftsman", says Andreas. "What he did with the medium, to me, just boggles the mind. It was poetry in motion."

As supervising animator of *The Lion King*'s villain, Scar, Andreas called on one of Mr. Kahl's creations, *The Jungle Book*'s Shere Khan for inspiration. Even with this, however, Deja was determined to make Scar a complete original. "There was a big danger for me to take what Milt had done and just build everything around that", he says. "I



Scar schemes against Simba in *The Lion King*. © The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved.



©The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved.

had studied Milt's work and the tiger my whole life, and knew a lot about what he put into it and how he would move this large cat around. But I thought, I cannot do that. It would look like someone put a wig on Shere Khan and called it a lion."

Andreas then turned to the vocal recording of Jeremy Irons, (who provides Scar's voice), and *The Lion King's* story itself, for further inspiration. "There were certain elements for this particular character that are not Shere Khan. Scar is much srawnier, he wants to be the king, but he isn't and he wants to take on his brother, but he's physically weaker."

Scar's hunched shoulders, slick mane and angular look are in stark contrast to *The Lion King's* hero, Simba. Ruben Aquino, the supervising animator for the adult Simba did a great job of capturing the majestic look of a lion. Ruben says he was able to achieve this because he and the other animators had the opportunity to study lions and lion cubs closely. "There's a certain feline quality about the way they move, which is sort of graceful and very loose", notes Aquino. "You can see this in your typical house cat, but because lions are so much larger and so much heavier, there's a difference in the way they carry their weight."

Growing up in Okinawa, Ruben had always been interested in art. But, after

graduating from college, he decided to pursue a career as an architect.

Having no luck finding employment in that field, Aquino took a job as an animation trainee at a small commercial house in Honolulu. After this, Aquino worked for Hanna-Barbera as a designer and layout man.

In 1982, Ruben joined the Disney studio as an in-betweener on *Mickey's Christmas Carol*. Like Andreas, he then moved on to animation work for *The Black Cauldron* and *The Great Mouse Detective*.

Aquino then served as supervising animator on Ursula the sea witch in *The Little Mermaid*, Jake in *The Rescuers Down Under*, and Belle's father, Maurice in *Beauty and the Beast*.

As a child, *Bambi* was the only Disney feature Ruben saw. He says that the parallels between that classic and *The Lion King* are justified, to a certain extent. "It was a comparison that occurred to us very early on", Aquino admits. "There are some differences, I think our film probably has more of a story, whereas *Bambi* was more just the life of a deer."

Both Ruben and Andreas concede that *The Lion King* has some very unique qualities. Andreas notes that what the film lacks is actually one of its most interesting aspects. "There's a total absence of humans," he

says. "They're not even referred to, they simply don't exist, and yet, it is about human problems." While Ruben says, "As an animator, I like to think that we've stretched ourselves in terms of quadrupedal animation, like the kind done in *Lady and the Tramp* and *101 Dalmatians*. We've tried, at least, to achieve what they achieved in those films."

In addition to animating Simba, Ruben also did the hand drawn animation that was then transferred to computers for *The Lion King's* impressive wildebeest stampede scene. He quickly quashes fears that computer animation will replace the traditional style. "I compare it to what happened to illustration when photography came in", he says. "Illustration didn't disappear, it was supplemented."

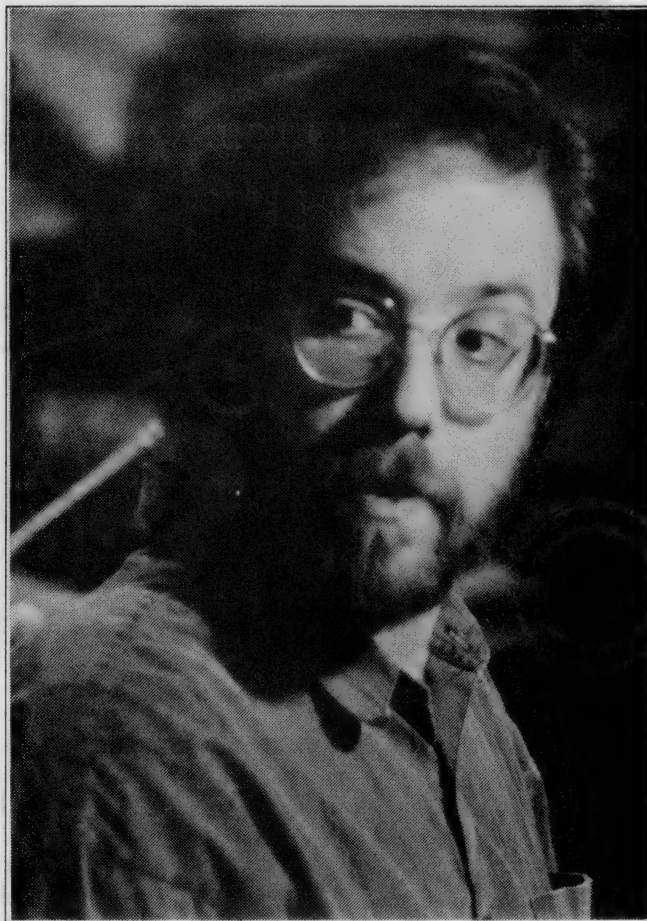
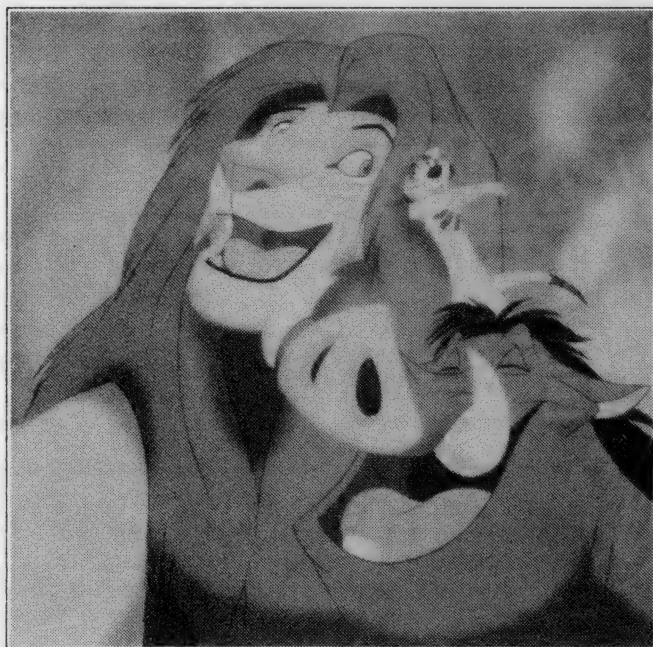
Andreas also has high hopes for the future of Disney animation. "I do believe our stories are becoming quite good. In terms of the acting, the drawing, the subtlety of the performance, I think there's always room for growth."

Let's hope there's also room for more heroes and villains from Ruben and Andreas.



Mike Lyons is a Long Island-based freelancer who has written numerous articles on film. This is his first article for ANIMATO!

Directing *The Lion King*



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Rob Minkoff takes us behind the scenes on the making of the new Disney feature

by Jim Fanning

Following in the footsteps of such Disney Golden Agers as Dave Hand, Wilfred Jackson and Ben Sharpsteen — all of whom first directed cartoon shorts before they directed Disney features — Rob Minkoff cut his director's teeth on two of Disney/Amblin's Roger Rabbit shorts before being signed on as co-director of *The Lion King*, Disney's 32nd animated feature.

In this interview, Minkoff speaks of his role in the creation of *The Lion King*, the newly released, envelope-pushing epic — part Shakespeare, part Scripture, part Elton John, all Disney.

You've had a lot of theatrical experience. How did you first start performing?

There was a really great children's theatre program in Palo Alto, California, where I grew up. I think my older brother

had done a show there. So there were auditions and someone else in my neighborhood might have gone, so I went. The first show I auditioned for and got in was actually a ballet, *Stone Flower*, a Russian ballet, very little known. I had absolutely no dance experience. I don't think anybody in the cast had any dance experience. It was just kids.

How old were you?

I was ten. Then once I did one show it was at least one if not two shows a year.

And that included both acting and singing?

Oh, yeah. Started to sing in elementary school, and was in an all city choir that was made up of all the different schools. Roger Wagner, the chorale leader, came down to conduct this big all-city choir. I remember getting picked out with a few other kids to sing a solo. There were about nine of us out

of a 500 or 600 person choir. It was really strange because we ended up singing the tenor solo of the piece but we all sang it in unison. That was my first big experience of learning a solo and working on it.

And you've continued theatre and music as an adult?

A little. I was in a choir at Cal Arts which was a great experience. They picked some really difficult material. I didn't do any shows until I started at Disney. Then every once in a while there was an opportunity to do something. I think the last show I did was *The Pirates of Penzance*.

I'm not sure many other artists in animation have a theatrical background.

Kirk Wise [co-director of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991)] has the same background. Kirk and I grew up in the same home town. I was around 14 or 15 and we both did a

children's theatre show. It's kind of weird, but believe it or not, we did *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I was the huntsman, and Kirk was a bat. Kirk had to hang upside down through most of the show. I was fortunate enough not to have to do that.

We met that way, and both found out we each drew cartoons. We became really fast friends as a result, and spent a lot of time together. We knew each other all through high school and did a lot of shows. Then we did a local show here, *My Sister Eileen*, at the Glendale Centre Theatre in 1987.

Do you feel a connection between animation and the theatre?

I loved musical theatre, and also loved to draw and I loved the movies, and animation always seemed a great combination of all these things. Animation encompasses everything. What's great about doing it now as a director is before we bring actors in to do the performances, we get a chance to do the dialog ourselves, do scratch lines. That's really fun. It's a great outlet.

It's often been said that an animator is an actor with a pencil.

My acting background helped my animation. When I did a performance, my first approach would be as an actor. I would think, "How would I play this performance? How would I play this scene?" I think all animators do that one way or another, but it was a natural thing to do it instinctively — to become the character and perform as the character and then try to distill what that was in drawings.

Has your acting background helped you as a director?

As a director, my benefit in working with animators is having been an animator myself more so than having been an actor. My theatre background has probably helped more in working with the actors. I've worked on *The Lion King* with some big actors so it helps that I've been around actors. Actors have a totally different temperament than animators do. It helps that I can go into that situation and not feel intimidated by the fact that their performance comes in a totally different way than the animators'. With an animator it's much easier to be analytical. You can break it down because animation is all about the pieces fitting together. An actor's

performance is usually a lot more intuitive so you can't always direct an actor with the same kind of analytical approach. Actors can't always internalize that. It's too cerebral, so they're not able to get behind what it is. You have to approach the actors from a different place in order for them not only to be comfortable but to give a good performance.

It would seem that voice actors have to be even more intuitive since they rely only on their voices.

I don't know that they use a different process. Some people do. Jeremy Irons, the voice of Scar, for example, is very mike-savvy. He knows how to work with the microphone. He can do things technically with his voice with the microphone that give it a different sound of feel.

In that respect, his approach is a little different from someone who says, "Point me at the mike and get me started." James Earl Jones, who does the voice of Mufasa, is much more like that. He doesn't like all the technicalities. The more technical it gets, the more uncomfortable he feels. He'd much prefer just to be intuitive, to do his performance, so he's not thinking about the difference between actually acting a scene or using his voice.

A lot of the actors will be very physical. Even though they're sitting down behind a mike they get very physically involved in it.

Can you give any examples?

The best is Rowan Atkinson who plays Zazu, the comic relief character. He's the British comic actor who's in *The Black Adder* and *Mr. Bean*. He is the most hilarious physical comedian I've ever seen. It's totally instinctive. When he's behind the mike he makes the funniest gestures — when he's on-mike and off-mike, when he's just listening. After he does the lines he'll look back at the booth just to see — "was that okay?" — and it's hilarious. So funny and quirky. So there's so much that we've got on film of him. Unfortunately, there's great stuff that you can't always use. It's just great resource material. It's good for the animators, too, to be able to get a sense of the mannerisms of the actor, because that can inform the way they approach a scene.

How is *The Lion King* different from

recent Disney features?

Of all of the recent features, *The Lion King* is probably the most different, for a couple of reasons. Number One, it doesn't have a Howard Ashman-Alan Mencken score, which makes a big difference. Elton John and Tim Rice wrote the score. They come at it with a whole different perspective. Elton John particularly comes at it with a whole different musical vernacular than Alan does. So on that level it's very different.

It's also not a love story, in the typical sense. It is, but it's not the love story between a prince and a princess which all of the other pictures recently really have been. *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Aladdin* (1992) have all fit into that genre. *The Lion King* is really much more of a story about a father and son. It's great because it's a crucial relationship — extremely powerful. It's given us a whole different story to deal with in terms of drama and what the message of the movie ultimately is.

In what ways is *The Lion King* similar to recent Disney productions?

Many of the same people who worked on *Aladdin* and *Beauty and the Beast* and *Mermaid* worked on this, either in story or as animators — although on this movie we've also had a lot of young animators come up and be leads on characters for the first time. Disney has split the animation studio in two to make two movies at the same time. So *Pocahontas*, which is the next feature, got [animators] Glenn Keane, Duncan Marjoribanks, and a bunch of the people who have done lead characters.

The two people on *The Lion King* we have who've been stars in previous films are Mark Henn and Andreas Deja, who is doing Scar. Aside from that, almost without exception, everybody else is a first time lead. Also, Rueben Aquino, who did Ursula in *Little Mermaid* and Maurice in *Beauty and the Beast*, in this film is animating the hero. So he's gone from the villain in *Mermaid* to a supporting role in *Beauty* and now he's doing the lead, the adult Simba. Mark Henn is doing young Simba.

Does the influx of young talent lend a freshness to this film?

Absolutely. At first it was scary because with the studio split in half we didn't know



Robert Guillaume's performance of Rafiki, the eccentric baboon mystic, was a delightful surprise for Minkoff.
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how the heck we were going to get the movie done. In fact, for other reasons, Disney ended up pushing the release of *Pocahontas* back, which gave us the opportunity to use a lot of the support staff and clean-up people and background painters. A lot of the people who weren't going to work on our movie got to work on it which was a great help.

Though many of the leads on our movie were new, they still worked on the other pictures so they've had that same experience. So you end up with a very similar sensibility in terms of entertainment. The structure's different, some of the major set pieces are extremely different, but it's injected with that same sort of sensibility.

What are some of your favorite moments in *The Lion King*?

There's the stampede sequence, which I think is spectacular. Simba is the young cub born to the king, Mufasa, played by James Earl Jones. Young Simba is played by Jonathan Taylor Thomas from *Home Improvement*. He's born to the king so he's next in line to the throne, which puts him a step over the king's brother, Scar. So he's jealous of being stepped over in line to the

throne and plots with the hyenas who are the evil outcasts of the pridelands. And he plots with them to murder both the king and Simba. Banzai and Shenzi, the hyenas are played by Cheech Marin and Whoopi Goldberg, and there's a third hyena who just laughs a lot. His name is Ed, and he's a cross between Harpo Marx and Ed McMahon. That's why we called him Ed, because he laughs a lot. Jim Cummings did all the laughing for Ed, and it's really great stuff.

Anyway, Scar plots with them to murder the king. Scar tricks Simba to going down into the gorge and the hyenas scare up a wildebeest stampede down into the gorge. It's a huge, dramatic set piece.

Does this come early in the film?

It's about 40 minutes into it. It's interesting because it's probably structurally the end of the first act, but the first act, for some reason in animation tends to be very long. So the first act is about 40 minutes long. And it's a herd of thousands of wildebeests, literally. The computer, the CGI animators for the first time have done work on characters, flesh and bone characters, even though the wildebeests are very

animalistic. But we did an interesting hybrid where Rueben Aquino actually animated run cycles in two dimensions to give it a hand-animated look, and then the computer animators took those runs and reinterpreted them as three-dimensional models which could be turned from any angle. They would still keep the same run cycle. Then they came up with a thing called an avoidance program where as the objects would move towards each other, if they got too close, if they were in danger of colliding, they would naturally turn, change directions. So they establish a leader and set all of the others to follow the leader, but if they start to get too close and bunch up, they turn. But as, of course, they turn, they'll run into somebody else, then they'll turn away from that, so it's very realistic. But ultimately what it gives you is the appearance of absolute random behavior, and it really is—but it looks hand-animated. There's one shot I think with over a thousand individual wildebeests in it. It's not something that would have been possible to do ten years ago. It would have been ridiculous.

Along with that, because of the drama of the moment, and because we put a lot into

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it cinematically, it's a very powerful piece. We just recently heard the music that Hans Zimmer is writing, the underscore, and it's unbelievable, really amazing. So that's a really thrilling piece of film. I think it's one of the moments in the picture that universally everyone stops thinking about the fact that they're drawings. I mean, completely. They said that about *Beauty and the Beast*. I think they've said that about a lot of the recent movies that you can get beyond that. But I think this one sequence in its own way does that even more so because you're really caught up in the moment. It's really sort of an edge of the seat kind of experience. It's not dissimilar to a lot of live action pictures in that way. But it does it in animation which makes it I think more interesting.

Are there any character moments that stand out for you?

We have a great, great cast. Not only the voice actors but the animators. Scar is a great performance. Young Simba is really amazing. There's Rafiki, who is a baboon, kind of a mystic wise man who comes to bless Simba, and he kind of presents him to the gathered animals. And this character was

voiced by Robert Guillaume and animated by James Baxter. And it's beautiful, brilliant animation, and it really combines with the voice for a really great performance—totally believable. And really fun because the character's kind of quirky. That was the interesting thing.

When I started on the picture, the original conception of the character was very straight, as you might imagine with Robert Guillaume. He was described as the elder statesman, and one of the things I remember—both Roger [Allers, co-director of *The Lion King*] and I felt that the character should be more fun. We wanted the character to be more interesting, so we said let's just make him kind of zany, Ben Gunn from *Treasure Island* crossed with a Yoda kind of character. They had already contracted with Robert Guillaume and we thought, "Oh, my God, how are we going to get this to work?" We thought we'd have to kind of go into it in good faith and try to make it work with him.

So we showed up at the session after Robert Guillaume had already done one or two sessions and done a very different interpretation of the character, extremely dour. We sort of walked in and said, "Well,

we want to try to experiment a little with this. We want to try to mix it up." He sort of had this glazed look of fear, but we kind of said let's go see what happens. It really took a while, it's hard to break through what he was used to doing, what he was comfortable doing. We knew we needed him to really go out on a limb, really be out there. So I remember a sort of a magic moment with the character happened—we were doing some section and I think I asked him if he would laugh into the line. He did this great laugh that was wacky and crazy and funny and weird—it was really great and it sort of set the character. I think Don Hahn was there too, so me and Roger and Don were there just going, "oh, that's great." We kept Robert doing that. It became a real technique with finding the performance, the laughter would somehow always spark something that would bring him to a really, really great performance. I mean, you would never know it was him based on his other work. There are some great scenes of Rafiki.

Also, there's two comic characters, Pumbaa and Timon, that are really fun. Nathan Lane plays Timon, who was in *Guys and Dolls*, and Ernie Sabella, also from



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Guys and Dolls, is Pumbaa, so it's very funny because they're kind of transplanted New Yorkers. It's a wart hog and a meerkat. What happens is after the stampede Mufasa is killed, so that's again a big dramatic moment and Simba is chased off by the hyenas and he escapes, but he runs out knowing he can't return and he's out alone on the desert. He's basically on the edge of death, and the vultures descend and out of the blue runs these two characters, a wart hog with a meerkat riding on like a horse. They dispatch the vultures and are surprised to discover that there's a lion. Of course, the meerkat is terrified and wants to get out of there, but the wart hog is sympathetic and kind of slow, been dropped on his head, and wants to keep him. If they don't help Simba he's gonna die, but the meerkat really wants nothing to do with him. Finally, he's convinced to change his mind and take Simba in. They bring him to their home which is the jungle. And he grows up there and there's just some great bits.

When Scar took over the kingdom he brought the hyenas in, and they basically destroyed everything. The ecology of the place has gone down along with the attitude of Scar's rule. It's a bit Arthurian: when the king is removed from the land, the land deteriorates.

How was the luau scene created?

We had Timon and Pumbaa doing a soft shoe to kind of lure the hyenas away, which was really soft and not really that funny. Jeffrey Katzenberg hated it, so his idea was to have them do "*Stayin' Alive*." So we left the meeting thinking, "oh, my God, we have to come up with something else as a diversion." Finally we came up with the idea of doing the hula. It kind of wrote itself 'cause we took the Hawaiian War Chant, and then one of the writers, Irene Mecchi, did funny lyrics to it. Roger and I helped her polish it, and it was just really funky. When we ended up pitching it for Jeffrey, we decided to make it a total surprise. It was storyboarded by Barry Johnson, who's done outstanding work, and this is his first picture I think, first feature, as a story artist. For the meeting, I brought my ukelele from home. And although I couldn't really play it that well, somebody at work, [clean-up artist] Kenny Holiday, does play the guitar. And I said, "Oh, Kenny, do you know how to play

the ukelele?" And he said, "Yeah," and I handed it to him and said, "Here you go. We're gonna do this bit." So when we pitched it for Jeffrey it was a total surprise. Sat him down, here's the idea for replacing this bit of business. And at the appropriate moment Don Hahn introduced it, Don is also a percussionist, plays bass. So Don leapt over to the Sparkletts water bottle and started banging out the rhythm and I screamed, "Luau," and Kenny leapt up with the ukelele, and started strumming and we did this bit of business.

This was relatively very recent to the process, one of the last pieces of the puzzle to fit in. We had a trip to New York scheduled where we got Nathan Lane to record it and he fell off his chair. He couldn't get past saying, "Luau," and he just cracked up. So we finally got a great take and brought it back, and it was actually Roger's sequence to direct. So Roger actually had to hand it off to the animator and work with the animator, Brian Ferguson, who is also a young guy who did some Iago in *Aladdin*. There's a bit in *Aladdin* where the Sultan is flying after Iago and they end up hitting the post and the little Sultan's circling around his head. That was actually Brian Ferguson's idea. He is one of those great young guys — really funny. We actually had to do some recasting and rearranging of sequences so that he could do it because it seemed like he was going to bring a real spark to it. Mike Surrey and Tony Bancroft are the lead animators on Timon and Pumbaa.

Did you often have to travel to record the voices?

Mostly we'd gone to London or New York to record the actors, but there have been occasions recently when we've been into production, and it's been hard to break away. In fact, this is a good earthquake anecdote. January 17, the day of the Northridge earthquake, we had a session to do with Matthew Broderick [the voice of the adult Simba], who was in South Carolina. I got a call from the production manager on the day of the earthquake, asking "Can you still do it?" So I ended up directing a session from my house in Glendale with Matthew in South Carolina. It's very difficult over the phone. It's a little bit commando, sort of guerrilla tactics.

How did you become involved with *The Lion King*?

It's become a very typical thing at Disney to go through several development phases. One of them unfortunately is the big story meltdown. It happened on *Aladdin*. It happened on *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. So three in a row. Basically what's happened is Disney decides they want to make the movie. From there, it goes through development. They'll bring in writers, they'll write scripts, they'll rewrite scripts. They're looking for the story as to how they're going to approach the material. On *The Lion King*, a number of different people worked on the project, but I think the project came up as an idea four years ago, so this is quite a while. Ultimately people have different ideas of what the movie should be. It was originally going to be very much a nature kind of film, very true to life. Even the art direction was going to be very realistic. And they had these Elton John - Tim Rice songs. They only had one before I got on the picture. But Elton's music was at first considered to not be very African — because it's Elton John music. And the big rift happened I think over whether there were going to be songs in the picture or not, and I think that was the dividing point — the issue of the music.

When I got asked to be on the picture, it was sort of Elton John and Tim Rice are writing the score. So there's no debate about that issue. Because as director, that's part of your job. You have to debate the ideas you disagree with. But if you lose, you lose. And you either roll with it or you don't.

What happened when you first came onto the project?

I didn't know when I got hired [to direct] what we were going to be allowed to do. Roger had been on the project before this. Roger got dragged onto the movie. He did not want to have anything to do with this movie, and it was not a movie that I was terribly interested in at the time either. It's not something I would ever want to do, and then, of course, I get asked to do that.

What helped me change my mind was seeing a documentary a couple months before any of this had happened — called *Lions and Hyenas - Eternal Enemies* — which was by the Jouberts. This documentary was incredible, one of the most powerful things

I've ever seen about the real nature of lions and hyenas. It was frightening, but really visceral. You got to know the animals because the Jouberts lived with them for seven years. I remember after I saw it, thinking, "Well, if *The Lion King* has half the power of this, it could be great." So that was certainly a helpful factor because once you kind of get the bug in your head that you think there's potential, even if it's untapped or it's gonna be hard to find, you know, already it's worth doing. And everybody had seen that documentary. It kind of became a real touchstone for a lot of people.

When I came on, I met with Roger and Don and basically asked questions, "What can we change? Is any of this in stone?" And Don said no, anything goes. So we got into a group, me and Roger and Don, and Brenda Chapman, who was head of story. We brought in Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale [directors of *Beauty and the Beast*] as part of a group of people, and we sat in a room for two days and totally hammered out a new storyline. We reworked it, put it up on boards, and we got the okay from everybody all the way up the line, and it hasn't diverted from that story. I mean, we've rewritten every scene, pulled pieces, we've done a lot of Lego shifting, but as far as what it was about and what the basic structure and form of it was, it really hasn't changed that much. From then forward, it's been a process of getting that movie made. That's kind of the history. My first day was April 1st, April Fool's Day.

Luckily Roger and I, our vision for the picture and our sensibilities, are very closely aligned. It's made it possible to work together. It's never easy. I can't say it's easy to work together because we both are extremely opinionated, and we have our own ways of doing things. Even though we have similar sensibilities, similar tastes. The good aspect of our relationship is that we are able to fight with each other about creative issues, and it's never personal. We'll always be able to get past that. The best thing is that if he comes up with something that I don't like, we'll fight about it. And if I come up with something he doesn't like, we'll fight about it. The compromises that we make are never to relinquish and do what the other person wants to do — it's to come up with some better way of doing it, which we both like. So even though we'll butt heads, it's sort of part of the process to get to that other idea that

maybe neither of us might have come up with alone.

Elton John might seem like an unusual choice for this project. How did he go about providing the songs?

Obviously, he's Elton John, and he writes songs in a particular way. When you can tell it's an Elton John song, we usually responded really well. Elton basically said, "I'm gonna write the songs, and I'm going to give them to you, and then you're going to do with them whatever you think is right." So he's been very, very cooperative in that way. With Hans Zimmer we've actually been able to take the songs and bring an ethnic feel to the material, do the arrangements that have brought them into the world of Africa. If we went with absolutely traditional African music, I think it would not really necessarily be what people would expect from Disney. It might be interesting on a creative level, but as far as the kind of the popular entertainment that these things are, it might not quite fit in.

So he wrote ultimately about seven songs with Tim and five of them ended up in the movie. A couple of the songs weren't quite happening — not just that — they weren't fitting in to the structure of the movie. And that's typical. With *Aladdin*, there was a bunch of songs that Howard and Alan wrote that didn't make it in the movie — a bunch. And there's one big number in *Beauty* — "Human Again" — which didn't make it into the movie. So that's pretty normal.

It's been a case of really embracing the musical material and making it work for the movie. That's kind of what our job is anyway. A great measure of credit is owed to Hans because he's had to keep the integrity of the songs and at the same time dress them up or give them something of the flavor of African music so that it fits into the world of the film. So it's a hybrid, but I think it's successful. There's a whole different thing that happens when you talk about a song that stands out from the film and then something that's going to actually feel integrated into the film. So the structure becomes very crucial, and Tim Rice has helped bring the theatrical sensibility to the material to help structure it. It's been a good collaboration.

It'll be interesting to see what people think. Again, we're still right in the middle

of arranging some of the songs, so not everything is all in yet. We've had such overwhelming response from "Circle of Life" and not just the song, which I think is a great song, but what Hans did with the introduction. There's a guy named Lebo from South Africa, who came in and did some vocals, did some chanting and actually added some Zulu words to some of the underchanting of the song, which has worked out so well. So it's kind of synergy.

How do you want people to remember *The Lion King* after it's been released and everyone's seen it?

I want them to remember it very well! Actually, even though everyone feels that it will do very well, we won't know until it's out there. We can't count our chickens before they're hatched. But I do hope those that see *The Lion King* will look back on it as a feature that breaks the mold. It is groundbreaking in terms of Disney animation in a psychological sense, in that it deals with Simba dealing with his guilt over his father's death. We've never dealt with that before. And it's about coming-of-age. The closest thing Disney has ever done with that theme, come to think of it, is *Pinocchio* (1940).

And *Bambi* (1942)?

In its basic aspect, yes. But not so overtly as *Pinocchio*. That's what *Pinocchio* is about — I mean, he wants to become a real boy so he goes through a process of accepting responsibility of coming of age, like Simba in a way. *Pinocchio* proves his heroism by saving Geppetto from Monstro.

What kind of project would you like to direct as your next feature?

I'd like to do another original story. It's certainly challenging but it's also very liberating. We are free to tell the story and let it become what it is. It was exciting to discover what *The Lion King* is because until we made it, no one knew. So that whole process of creating and discovering a story is exciting. 

Jim Fanning's in-depth interviews with animation professionals have been featured numerous times in ANIMATO!.

OFFICIAL BALLOT for the ANIMATO! FILM POLL

Television Series

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
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- 6.....
- 7.....
- 8.....
- 9.....
- 10.....

Television Specials

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Feature Films

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Theatrical Shorts

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Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Independent Shorts

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Favorite Animators

- 1.....
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Favorite Villains

- 1.....
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- 5.....

Favorite Characters

- 1.....
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- 5.....

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Yogi Bear: The Final Chapter

Tim "Ranger" Smith brings us up to date with the career of America's favorite animated bear

By Tim Smith

Back in **ANIMATO!** #23, the first issue published by Pat Duquette and Mike Dobbs, I wrote an analysis of the television career of Yogi Bear, covering all nine of his tv series. That issue was immensely popular and back copies soon became unavailable.

Now Pat has blamed this unfortunate situation to the mass quantities of **ANIMATO!** #23 ordered by my relatives. But my story, and I'm sticking to it, is that the hundreds of orders which poured in from various Smiths were all from relatives of Jellystone Park's Ranger Smith, not me.

After contributing three decades of uniformed service, the man was finally recognized in a major publication and I think the reaction of his family is understandable. Despite the little tiff in this regard, I have agreed to complete the long-awaited follow up to the article on Yogi's tv series. "Yogi: The Final Chapter" will complete the coverage of Yogi's 35-year film career by reviewing his movies and specials.

To refresh the memories of those readers who may have missed the earlier article and been frustrated in their attempts to obtain a back issue, let me begin with a brief show-by-show recap of the various tv series. A rating system of one-to-four picnic baskets has been employed throughout.

YOGI BEAR ~ (the original shorts, 1958-63)
4 picnic baskets

The original and still the best! After making his debut on *The Huckleberry Hound Show* in 1958, Yogi's popularity immediately skyrockets. He is soon rewarded with his own show and, supported by Boo Boo, Cindy Bear, and Ranger Smith, goes on to become the signature character of the Hanna-Barbera studio.

YOGI'S GANG ~ (1973-75) 2 picnic baskets

The ensemble cast of Hanna-Barbera all-stars is a refreshing first for Yogi, but new broadcasting standards force a preachy environmental theme which grows weary. Joe Barbera publicly mourns the days when you could have a cat chase a mouse and not have to make him stop in mid-pursuit to teach the mouse how to blow glass or weave a basket.

ALL-STAR LAFF-A-LYMPICS ~ (1977-80)
2 picnic baskets

Snagglepuss and Mildew Wolf co-host this sports spoof. Three-way team competitions between the "Scooby's", the "Yogi's" and the "Really Rottens" involve scores of characters and in a unique touch of reality, the bad guys even win occasionally.

YOGI'S SPACE RACE ~ (1978-79) 1 picnic basket

In an attempt to cash in on the *Star Wars* craze, Yogi's next round of competitions are set in space. It's a high-flying concept but the show crashes and burns.

GALAXY GOOF-UPS ~ (1978-79) 1 picnic basket

In an ill-conceived *Star Wars* meets *Saturday Night Fever* debacle animators prove, if nothing else, that it is possible to incorporate musical material like "Disco Cowboy, Disco Down" into a sci-fi Yogi cartoon.

YOGI'S TREASURE HUNT ~ (1985-88) 3 picnic baskets

The best of the Yogi spinoffs successfully utilizes some techniques still seen in today's most outstanding cartoon series. Extensive use is made of contemporary caricatures and topical humor. Also contributing to the series' appeal is a conscious effort to use the history of animation, both at H-B and other studios, as a source of humor.

YOGI BEAR ~ (new shorts, 1988-89) 2 picnic baskets

In order to fill out a package for syndication, Hanna-Barbera returns Yogi to Jellystone and attempts to resurrect the

original series with only moderate success. Some changes in television standards from three decades earlier are noticeable, but Yogi doesn't even miss those irate park visitors constantly clanging his head with frying pans.

FENDER BENDER 500 ~ (1991-92) 2 picnic baskets

This series consists of short 5-minute cartoons depicting various Hanna-Barbera characters competing in 4 x 4 truck races. Having previously participated in various contests ranging from mock Olympics to spaces races, Yogi is a seasoned competitor and a natural for this series, which meets its modest expectations.

YO, YOGI! ~ (1991-92) 1 picnic basket

A modern-day debacle with junior versions of Yogi and pals hanging out at the mall. Peter Potamus, always a character of questionable masculinity, opens a flower shop. 3-D segments are included in several episodes, but in the case of *Yo, Yogi!*, two dimensions are already too many.

Yogi's career in movies and specials consists primarily of six films which fall rather neatly into three different eras and categories. First, there was the one theatrical feature released in 1964. Then, after a long lull, there are two Christmas specials from the early 1980's, and finally, there are three made-for-tv movies which were part of the *Hanna-Barbera's Superstars 10* series, released in 1987-88.

It should be noted that Yogi did make minor appearances in a few other films which are not included in this article. In *Casper's First Christmas* (1979), Yogi is one of several characters who throw a party in Casper's haunted house, and he is also one of the townsfolk in *The Good, The Bad, and Huckleberry Hound* (1988). But these appearances are little more than cameos and here we will restrict our analysis to films where Yogi is the central figure—just like he always wanted to be.

HEY THERE, IT'S YOGI BEAR
(1964) 4 picnic baskets

This film was the first full-length feature ever produced by Hanna-Barbera, and thirty years later, it's probably still the best. Released only two years after the conclusion of *The Yogi Bear Show*, this film succeeds in recapturing much of the charm and appeal of the original series.

Once again, it's spring at Jellystone Park. It's a time when a young bear's heart turns to thoughts of love, or at least some of them do. While Yogi remains as aloof as ever, Cindy Bear is being driven insane by the incessant ticking of her biological clock. She subsequently rededicates herself to the task of seriously sinking those sexy claws into Yogi and elevating the relationship to a higher plane.

Cindy's amorous efforts prove short-lived however, when Yogi miscalculates the resolve of Ranger Smith and finds himself the reluctant owner of a one-way ticket to the San Diego Zoo. Devotedly attempting to follow her man, Cindy intentionally violates park rules hoping to win her own trip to the zoo, but two things go wrong. Her new zoo address turns out to be in St. Louis and, unbeknownst to her, Yogi is in hiding and has never left Jellystone.

Not to worry though. Yogi's reflective seclusion serves to revamp his romantic philosophy and, accompanied by Boo Boo, the wooin' bruin sets out to retrieve his woman. After finding Cindy held captive at the Chizzling Brothers Circus, where she is being forced to perform a high wire act, Yogi and Boo Boo effect an exciting rescue highlighting the best storyline of any of the Yogi features.

In addition to the strong plot, Yogi's full length debut also benefits from above-average animation and an exceptionally appealing musical soundtrack. Sing and laugh, and make romance—this is Yogi at his inimitable best!

YOGI'S FIRST CHRISTMAS (1980) 3 picnic baskets

Despite a film career spanning decades, Yogi's annual hibernation had always caused him to miss the Yuletide season, at least until this year. A party of Yogi's old Hanna-Barbera pals arrive at Jellystone Lodge with the intent of initiating Yogi into the Christmas tradition with a sensational celebration of the season.

The festivities are jeopardized, however,

by a local cave-dwelling grinch known as Herman the Hermit. By secretly sabotaging most of the events on last year's holiday agenda, Herman has managed to persuade Mrs. Throckmorton, the owner of the lodge, to close down for the season before selling the lodge for good.

The outlook grows even more dismal when Mrs. Throckmorton's sniveling son Snively emerges as Herman's right hand henchman. But despite the villains' best efforts they are unable to alter two inalienable rules of the cartoon kingdom. Christmas, of course, cannot be stolen and no one, perhaps, can blunder his way to success like Yogi Bear.

The holiday and the lodge are both saved, but something even more precious may have been lost. The aphrodisiac effect of the mistletoe turns Cindy Bear into a vamping seductress, the likes of which Jellystone has never seen. At the end of one sultry song she summons her man saying, "Yogi, there's something I want to show you...", and it sounds like she really means it!

YOGI BEAR'S ALL-STAR CHRISTMAS CAPER (1982) 2 picnic baskets

It's the holiday season and a busload of Hanna-Barbera Christmas partiers, including Huckleberry Hound, Quick Draw McGraw, and Snagglepuss, are heading to Jellystone. Ironically, however, Yogi and Boo Boo have left for the city to see them. Once the bears' escape from the park is realized, the chase is on.

Disguised as department store Santas, Yogi and Boo Boo find themselves being pursued by what seems like everyone in town. The posse includes their friends, the Ranger, the police, and the rich father of a young runaway girl they have befriended.

It is not without reason that this special was billed as the "All-Star" caper. More cartoon characters show up for guest spots in this half hour than in any of Yogi's full-length features.

Even time travel is successfully accomplished. During the search for Yogi, an astonished Snagglepuss rounds one street corner and exclaims, "Heavens to cameo guest stars! It's Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble!" And indeed it is.

YOGI'S GREAT ESCAPE (1987) 2 picnic baskets

It's springtime, and after waking up from a nice winter's hibernation, Yogi and Boo Boo are anxiously anticipating the return of the park picnicking season and the bountiful baskets that come with it. Their exhilaration is short-lived however. The poor guys have barely set foot outside their cave before being confronted by a trilogy of trouble.

First, three orphan bears have been left at their door. Second, Jellystone Park is being closed because of financial problems. And third, the park bears are being relocated to a zoo. Well, three strikes and the boys are out—out of the park that is. Rather than accept a future behind bars, Yogi and Boo Boo opt for a life on the lam.

The rest of the film features Ranger Smith hot on the trail of the "Fugitive Five"...the three orphan cubs being too damn cute to leave behind. The pursuit follows a rather episodic path, with one classic Hanna-Barbera character thematically appearing in each of three segments.

The chase is pursued through a Wild West town sheriffed by Quick Draw McGraw, to a Mississippi Riverboat run by Wally Gator, to a traveling circus directed by Snagglepuss. This meandering storyline ends in a rather abrupt climax emanating, from all places, the White House. Yogi gets a surprise telephone call from the President informing him that the park has been saved and everyone can return home.

YOGI AND THE MAGICAL FLIGHT OF THE SPRUCE GOOSE (1987) 3 picnic baskets

The best of the three Yogi features in the *Superstars 10* series finds the gang in Long Beach, California, visiting the historic hangar of the legendary Spruce Goose, the largest cargo plane ever to take flight. Some of the most visually appealing animation in this ten-film Hanna-Barbera series is offered during the plane's enchanted take off with the Spruce Goose ascending a stardust stairway and the various characters seeing themselves come alive as constellations at play.

Some live action segments also spruce up the film—we even get to see archival footage of Howard Hughes piloting the Spruce Goose in 1947. When the reclusive

Hughes died in 1976, he certainly never thought that his grand Goose would once again take flight, piloted by a bear no less.

The supporting cast which accompanies Yogi and Boo Boo on this magical flight includes Huck Hound, Snagglepuss, Quick Draw McGraw, Augie Doggie, Doggy Daddy, and a stowaway little girl named Bernice. The ensemble cast, as well as the storyline, are reminiscent of the flying ark concept of Yogi's Gang. This time the crew embarks on a globe-circling crusade to save endangered animals.

Their benevolent mission is imperiled by a chance desert isle encounter with the Dread Baron and Mumbley. The evil Baron combines his only two talents, treachery and aeronautics, to successfully effect a skyjacking of the Spruce Goose and, at least temporarily, jeopardize the mission. While executing a difficult nighttime landing the Baron, safe in the knowledge that it is legally impossible to slander a dead man, even boasts that, "Howard Hughes was a truck driver compared to me!"

YOGI AND THE INVASION OF THE SPACE BEARS

(1988) 2 picnic baskets

This made-for-tv movie basically expanded upon the plotline of the 1959 short *Space Bear*, where an alien from outer space wreaks havoc after assuming Yogi's identity. Hypothesized here, is a Jellystone jeopardized by not just one alien Yogi, but an army of robotic Yogi clones supported by an equal number of Boo Boos.

The plot is planned and perpetrated by Zax—the "grand omnipotent omnefarious" ruler of the planet Zaxon who reveals his ineptitude fairly early in the story when he determines that Yogi and Boo Boo are the most intelligent forms of life on Earth, and transports them back to his home planet. After being gorged on a gaggle of gooseberry pies, the blissed out bears are unable to resist the cloning process.

With a tidal wave of Yogi's gushing like a geyser over the park, Ranger Smith cowers under his bedcovers in a quivering hallucinogenic heap. It's probably the most pathetic moment in Smith's long career. Anyone who felt Ranger Smith got a raw deal in 1990 when he was demoted to a mall security guard in *Yo, Yogi!* hasn't seen this. The stress of wearing the uniform has

obviously taken a bitter toll on this man.

On the other hand, some of Yogi's other supporting characters add new dimension to their dramatic range. Cindy Bear fills the void left by Ranger Smith and assumes a major role in spearheading the effort to alienate the aliens and save the park. And for those of you who thought he didn't have it in him, Boo Boo manages to seduce the sweetest little blue-eyed, pink-haired, space bear you ever laid eyes on...or paws for that matter.

Tim Smith insists he really isn't any relation to Ranger Smith, but is instead a teacher, animation fan and writer.





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Siebert From Page 29

using the character design from the early 1960s.

Ralph Bakshi is also heading a unit (see next story).

Although Seibert hasn't ruled out possibly piggybacking some of these shorts onto feature films releases by Castle Rock or New Line (Hanna-Barbera, like the two feature film companies are all part of the Turner Broadcasting group), he doesn't see theatrical release as the primary goal. His aim is to build a talent pool for the future of his company, and give The Cartoon Network a great publicity and programming boon.

Every two weeks animation fans (and hopefully, appreciative television writers and critics) can enjoy a brand new raucous, kick-ass, old fashioned funny cartoon.

Seibert isn't worried how "full" the animation is, but rather looks towards the bottom line. He said, concerning the "limited" versus "full animation" argument, that "the skill of the people to make you laugh" is the point.

"Do they have the resources to make you laugh? What issues are important here is what makes me laugh, what makes the world laugh," emphasized Seibert.

With that thought in mind, it's easy to understand why Seibert is willing to give both recent graduates from film schools and animators who have never directed before a chance to lead a unit and produce their own short.

"I'm looking for talent," he flatly declared. "The person has got to be an animator, not a writer, not a character designer, but someone who can run a film. The pictures are the boss."

With William Hanna and Joe Barbera themselves directing their own shorts, one wonders what these two men, who practically invented television animation, think about the new program. According to Seibert, they're "having a hoot." 

LANTZ From Page 44

animation, and tried to do with 600 drawings what we used to do with 7,000. They're like an animated radio script; the characters just read lines. If you turn the sound down you wouldn't have any idea what the storyline is. Even now everybody is trying to get into animation because they've found out that a picture like *Roger Rabbit* or *An American Tail* can gross a lot at the box office.

Q: I take it you didn't care for *Roger Rabbit*.

WL: No I didn't, but I'm glad it was made. It was just too fast for me, and I couldn't follow it. I also didn't like the idea of a rabbit being in love with a human character.

Q: Do you have any speculation on the future of computerized animation?

WL: I don't know too much about it, but that too has its limitations. You can't make a computer think, you can't make it act. I'm glad they made a picture like *Roger Rabbit* because it awakened the studios to the idea that if you put your money into a good animated cartoon with good animators, and a good story, and good music, they could have pictures that make money. They're all aware of that now.

Q: Do you have any words for future animators who may be reading this?

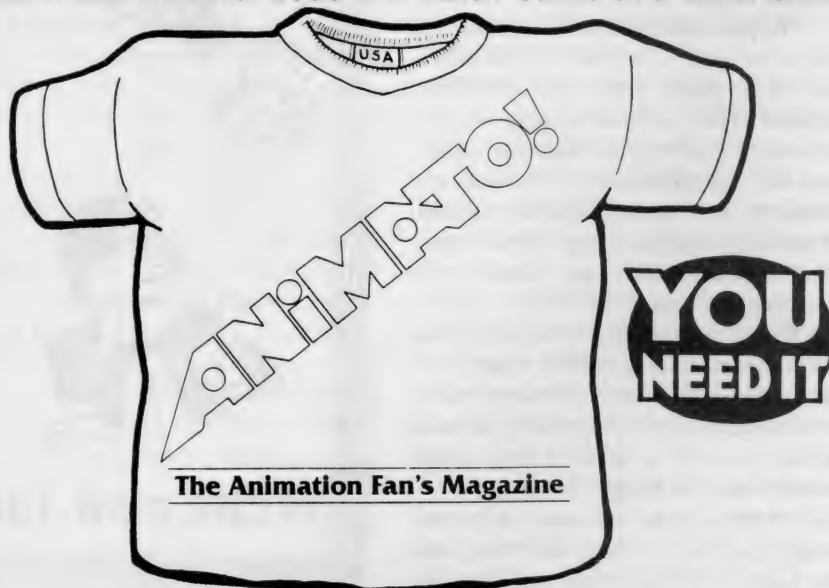
WL: It's not easy. I'd like to see more animators, but I want to see them learn their trade first. Go to art school. Learn how to draw. Study action. Study how people move. Now that you have cassettes, you can go out and photograph people and study the action. You can show it one frame at a time and study it. We didn't have that. There's a great future for animation and a greater future than ever before. To future animators, try to do good, full animation.

Q: Your long career has certainly provided them with a good base to work from. Thank you for talking to me today Mr. Lantz.

WL: Thank you John. I've never been on a soapbox for so long. 

John Province has been collecting original comic strip and animation art since 1965 when letters to Charles Schulz and Roy Williams resulted in his receiving original drawings from each. His key interest is in pre-WWII animation, and his favorite cartoon characters are Yosemite Sam and Betty Boop. He last interviewed veteran animator Walter Clinton for ANIMATO!

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TOON REVIEWS

From Page 8

the later shorts are crude post-synch jobs from the early sound era. The exception is *Comicalamities*, which enjoys well-recorded, lyrical theater orchestra accompaniment.

The smooth-grained Cinémathèque Québécoise prints are well preserved, with gray halation around the solid blacks being the only visible artifact of duplication. In a thoughtful gesture, a windowbox matte preserves the full 1.33:1 image area. Other aspects of the transfer are less commendable. Chapters 1 and 3 on my copy suffer from streaks of video dropout that were most apparent on the dark intertitles. In the freeze-frame and slow-motion modes, two out of every five frames jitter like Wile E. Coyote on earthquake pills. In addition to overestimating the running time by eight and a half minutes, the sleeve attributes chapters 1-4 to side 1, and chapters 8-12 to side 2.

Felix! compares poorly to the high standard of presentation and programming set by Lumivision and La Cinémathèque Québécoise's prior collaboration, the exquisite *Winsor McCay: Animator* (available on VHS and laser from Milestone). Michael Draine

Star Trek

From Page 23

Phylos at the end of *The Infinite Vulcan*, for example, certainly deserves an examination, and the novel would be a quite appropriate format. It should be noted that such things as the inclusion of the Kizinti in the Star Trek universe and Spock's giant clone are prime examples of why the animated series is so ignored. It's twists and turns are considered by some to be too outrageous. This argument falls apart when one considers that a giant Spock is certainly no more outrageous than Spock's return from the dead in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. Though many may choose to ignore the animated series, I believe that now, twenty years later, the complexity of the stories and of the characterization make this series richly deserving of our attention. In many ways, these cartoons may be legitimately viewed as shorter episodes of the original series.

Writer Kevin Lauderdale is making his first appearance in ANIMATO!.



TOON NEWS

From Page 11

Messmer's key assistant until the studio closed in 1930. "Otto was Felix's father," he told an interviewer in 1991. "I always thought of myself as his cousin."

When a mouse named Mickey conquered the popular cat of the cinema, Walker went to work for Max Fleischer Studios working on the *Betty Boop* series in 1931. While at Fleischer's, he created the character Whiffle Piffle, a bug-eyed dandy with a very distinctive walk. Walker also lent his talents to the two Fleischer feature films.

He did a series of animated training films for the Navy during World War II. After the war,

British Report

From Page 12

national papers commenting on the show's "offensive" and "dangerous" subject-matter, it's hard to see where else it could go. Any sadists hoping to see a stick of dynamite shoved up a cat's bottom will be disappointed; the episode's been banned.

UPDATE: Which neatly leads me on to the current censorship debate. On April 12th the Home Secretary capitulated to the pro-censor lobby, and announced tougher controls on film and television in Britain. Quite what this will mean is anyone's guess. According to the new guidelines, censors must rule against "films that present role-models that could prove harmful to a child", a ruling so ludicrously vague that, as cynics point out, it could outlaw *Bambi* and *Snow White*. Another stipulation is equally laughable: "violence must be central to a film's plot", presumably endorsing such works as *Driller Killer* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. In the end, we can only wait and see if anything workable emerges from this confused mess.

The signs for anime, though, are not good.

Walker opened his own studio where he animated, produced and directed a lengthy series of public health films for the state of Florida. Walker closed his studio, and ended his career in animation in the late 1960s. His last contribution to the art form he loved was historical; as an invaluable source of information for John Canemaker's definitive book on Felix the Cat. Hal Walker is survived by his wife Ruth and a legion of Felix fans the world over. John Province



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An increasing number of newspaper reports have focussed on these so-called "snuff cartoons" (yes, that's what they're called), and the import video industry is getting increasingly nervous. A lot of anime insiders condemn the pro-censorship movement, but it will take more than words to stop the legislators now. Personally, I would not shed tears if tripe like *Overfiend* and *Crying Freeman* was axed, but the danger is the good would be thrown out with the bad...

British Horror writer Clive Barker is entering into negotiations with Paramount over the animation of his acclaimed children's fantasy "The Thief of Always." He has his work cut out....can the film avoid "Disneyfication" without offending the Christian Right? And would it be worth it if it did?

Meatloaf has revealed he is to voice Quasimodo in Disney's "Hunchback of Notre Dame." Someone please tell me this is a joke...



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Toon Collectibles

From Page 24

Disney characters, which is then transferred to the acetate cel by a silk-screen process known as serigraphy." Sericels can be found in abundance at any Disney store, and are becoming readily available for other studios' characters as well. Take a quick glance at a sericel, and it is difficult to notice the difference, but studying a hand-painted limited next to one will leave the seri in the dust.

Unlike other studios, Disney has kept their new edition releases to a minimum. In 1992, they released 16 new limiteds, their highest output yet. Warner's and Hanna-Barbera, on the other hand, release on the average 20-plus editions a year. While most Disney limiteds are Xerox-lined, some are hand-inked. For sheer stunning appearance, a hand-inked Disney cel is a magnificent sight.

Recent Disney limiteds have shown moderate price increases. The most desirable

seem to be the multi-cel portfolios. As with any limited edition you like, buy it before it sells out or you will most likely pay a higher price. Disney cels are not signed. Hanna-Barbera and most Warner pieces have an advantage I've heard described as "the two hump jump": when the edition sells out, and when the artist of a signed piece passes on, the price tends to increase. One reason for the lack of signatures is that Disney believes in total team work. A signature may give more credit to one individual rather than the total Disney unit that produced the film.

If the limited edition cel market is any indication of studios' relationships with their animators, we have a strange situation. Disney believes in team work, Warner Brothers in individualism, and Hanna and Barbera . . . well, they sign some cels they don't even design. Signatures do attract attention, but most people look at Disney as a whole. A non-animation enthusiast

wouldn't even recognize the name Ward Kimball. Because of the cel's appearance, the lack of a signature does not detract from wanton desire to own a piece.

All in all, Disney cels are incredible pieces to admire and if you can afford one, I doubt you'll be disappointed. As far as investment potential is concerned, don't expect Hillary Clinton commodities type returns, but if you must sell a piece try a Disneyana convention. There is an incredible market for Disney memorabilia and a convention will bring you together with the most fanatic fan of Disney merchandise. As always, try to buy for intrinsic reasons and have fun bringing memories to your walls.

Paul Krempa is an animation art collector and writer.

Stuhr – From Page 27

asked me if I could do something more with it. So I began writing a little scenario for this character...that he was on a journey, just seeking. It turns out he's on this pilgrimage to a shrine, where Hendrix's spirit lives in ghostly form. The character enters the temple, and inside he encounters an obelisk...a monument to Hendrix. A flame burning before the obelisk comes to life, and the flame actually is Hendrix' spirit, making contact with the birdman character. (Author's note: Hendrix would've loved this scenario!)

Anyway, the budget kind of limited things, so we aren't able to do the entire scenario. But a good chunk of it will be there. I'm right now working on new footage for it, and what's going to happen is it will be worked into existing footage that was shot for the original *Are You Experienced?* video...the first version that Isham did 10 years ago. A lot of the same archival footage of Hendrix will be used. So in a way, this is a remake of a video, done to promote a re-mastered re-issue...it all works

out great!"

And there are more offers on their way as well. Some are even for feature-length projects, which Stuhr has mixed feelings about.

"I've been considering it...but I don't want to jump into doing a feature. I like the video format...five minutes long. At this point in my career, I'm still learning a lot. I've got a lot of learning to do before I even think in terms of a feature. It would be a bummer if I spent a year of my life working on a feature and it all turns out wrong. I've got a lot of practice to get under my belt still. The videos and little spots are great for that. I just want to be that much more prepared when I finally get my shot at doing a feature."



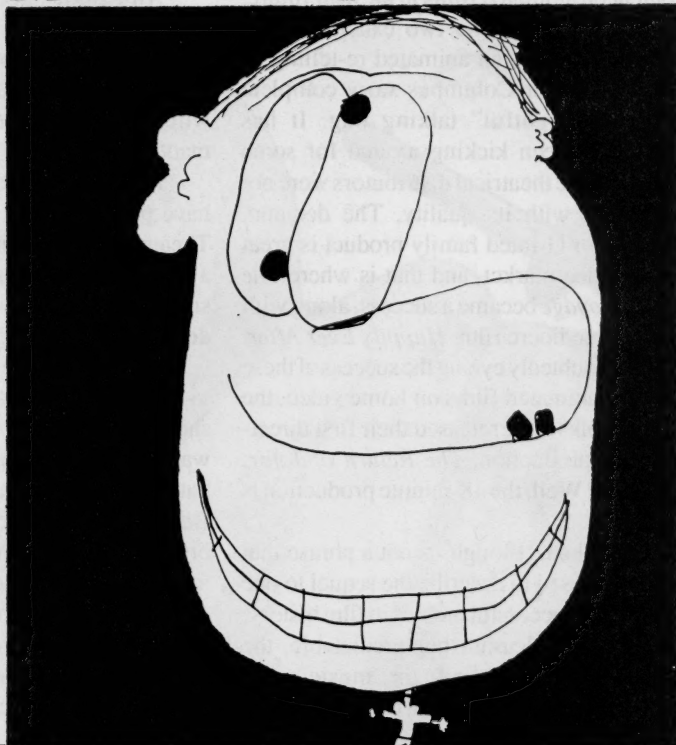
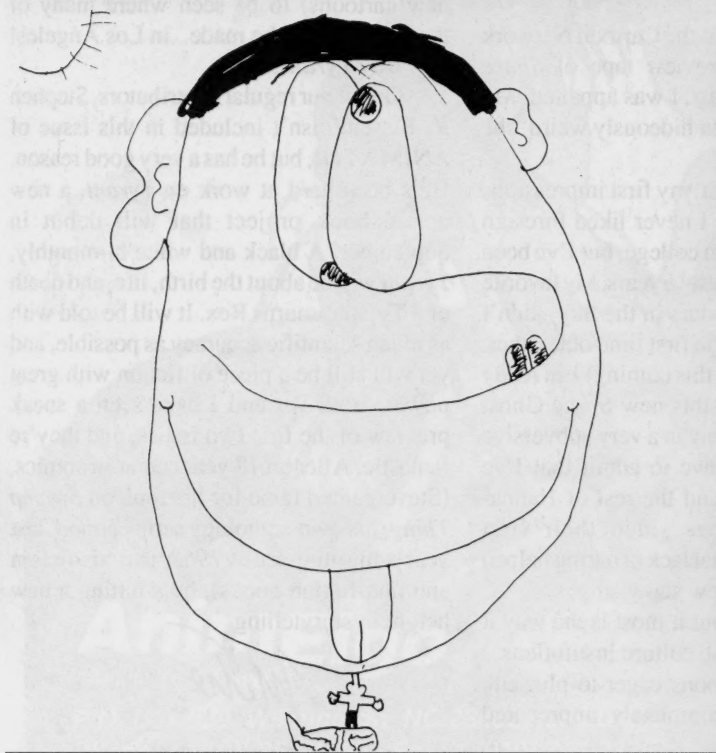
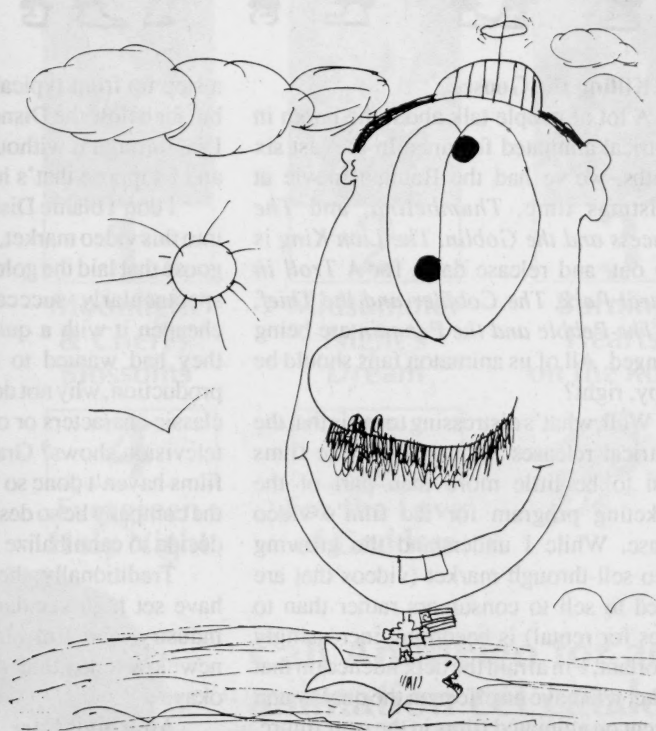
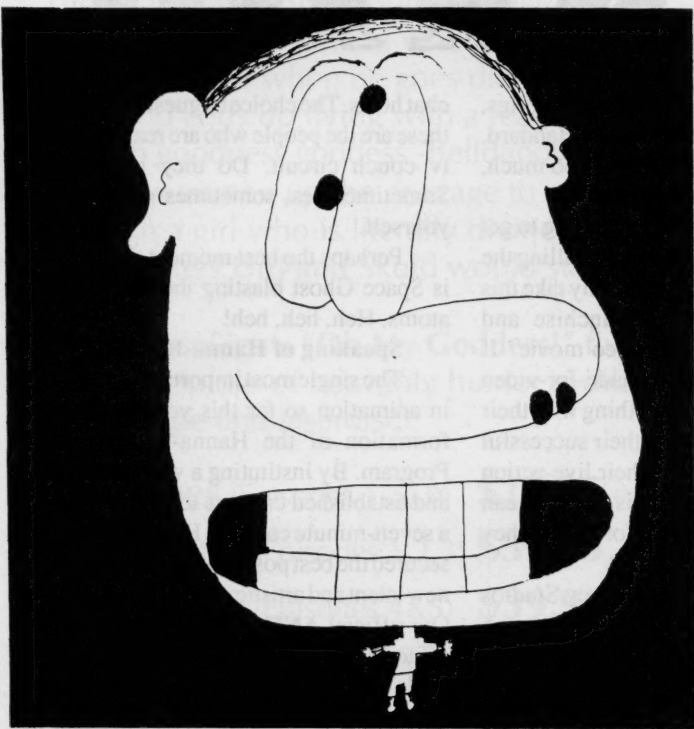
Southern California-based freelance writer Michelle Klein-Häss profiled Spumco's Jim Smith in the last issue of **ANIMATO!**.

**WANNA
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45**



YOUNG READERS' PAGE

Melissa Viens of Chicopee, Massachusetts submitted her stylized drawings titled "Goofy Guys". Melissa likes to draw just for fun. We think that is the best reason of all to draw pictures. By the way, three of the sketches resemble Animato! staffers Gene, Mike and Patrick.





Killing the Goose...

A lot of people talk about the boom in theatrical animated features. In the last six months, we've had the Batman movie at Christmas time, *Thumbelina*, and *The Princess and the Goblin*. *The Lion King* is now out, and release dates for *A Troll in Central Park*, *The Cobbler and the Thief*, and *The Pebble and the Penguin* are being arranged. All of us animation fans should be happy, right?

Well, what's distressing to me is that the theatrical releases for most of these films seem to be little more than part of the marketing program for the film's video release. While I understand the growing video sell-through market (videos that are priced to sell to consumers rather than to stores for rental) is becoming increasingly important, I'm afraid the dependence on that market will have an effect on the quality and content on animated films in the near future.

My case rests on two examples. *The Magic Voyage* is an animated re-telling of the Christopher Columbus story complete with a "delightful" talking bug. It has apparently been kicking around for some time because theatrical distributors were not impressed with its quality. The demand, though, for G-rated family product is great in the video market, and that is where *The Magic Voyage* became a success, along with another mediocre film, *Happily Ever After*.

Undoubtedly eyeing the success of these cheesey animated films on home video, the Disney folks have released their first direct-to-video production, *The Return of Jafar*. How is it? Well, the 48-minute production is not bad.

"Not bad," though, is not a phrase that should be used to describe the sequel to one of the most successful movies in film history. The story is pleasant but predictable, the humor is more muted, the music can't compare to the original, and the animation is

a step up from typical television offerings, but far below the Disney theatrical standard. I sat through it without flinching too much, and I suppose that's high praise.

I don't blame Disney for wanting to get into this video market, but they're killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Why take this spectacularly successful franchise and cheapen it with a quickie video movie? If they had wanted to do a made-for-video production, why not do something with their classic characters or one of their successful television shows? Granted their live-action films haven't done so well this year, but can the company be so desperate for money they decide to cannibalize *Aladdin*?

Traditionally, the Walt Disney Studios have set high standards for the animation industry, and I'm afraid they're setting a new low one...that cheap knock-offs are okay.

An About Face...

When the folks at the Cartoon Network first sent me the preview tape of *Space Ghost...Coast to Coast*, I was appalled. My wife thought it was so hideously weird, she made me turn it off.

But, as in the past, my first impressions have proved wrong. I never liked Firesign Theater while I was in college, but I've been a "Firehead" for the past 16 years. My favorite singing cowboys, Riders in the Sky, didn't do anything for me the first time out, either.

So, (you can see this coming) I'm ready to admit that I find this new Space Ghost show to be...very funny in a very subversive way. Of course, I have to admit that I've hated Space Ghost and the rest of Hanna-Barbera superheroes since their first broadcast. Perhaps that lack of caring helped me appreciate this new show.

What I like about it most is the way it sends up so many pop culture institutions... cheap superhero cartoons, eager-to-plug talk show guests, and completely unprepared

chat hosts. The choice of guests is inspired as these are the people who are really riding the tv couch circuit. Do they get the gag? Sometimes yes, sometimes no! Watch for yourself.

Perhaps the best moment that I've seen is Space Ghost blasting the Bee Gees into atoms. Heh, heh, heh!

Speaking of Hanna-Barbera...

The single most important development in animation so far this year has been the formation of the Hanna-Barbera Shorts Program. By instituting a way for both new and established creators to experiment with a seven-minute cartoon, Hanna-Barbera has secured the best possible way of encouraging new talent and artistic growth in this industry. Our official **ANIMATO!** baseball hats are off to Fred Seibert! Now, if only the gods of cable television would allow the Cartoon Network (which will be broadcasting these new cartoons) to be seen where many of these shorts will be made...in Los Angeles!

Buy Tyrant!

One of our regular contributors, Stephen R. Bissette, isn't included in this issue of **ANIMATO!**, but he has a very good reason. He's been hard at work on *Tyrant*, a new comic book project that will debut in September. A black and white bi-monthly, *Tyrant* will be about the birth, life, and death of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. It will be told with as much scientific accuracy as possible, and yet will still be a piece of fiction with great power. Both Pat and I have seen a sneak preview of the first two issues, and they're fantastic. After an 18 year career in comics, (Steve gained fame for his time on *Swamp Thing*, his own anthology series *Taboo*, last year's hit mini-series *1963*, and his fiction and non-fiction books), he's hitting a new height in storytelling.

Mike

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1

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& Cherry
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2

**Midsummer
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3

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4

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